



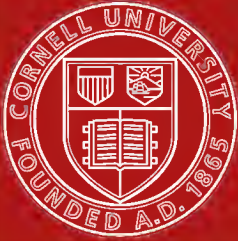
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Edition de Luxe

The Life and Works
of
Charles Lamb
IN TWELVE VOLUMES
VOLUME IX

FC

The Letters
OF
Charles Lamb

Newly Arranged, with Additions

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
ALFRED AINGER

VOLUME I

LONDON
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
1900

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SONNET TO ELIA

THOU gentle Spirit, sweet and pure and kind,
Though strangely witted—"high fantastical"—
Who clothest thy deep feelings in a pall
Of motley hues that twinkle to the mind,
Half hiding, and yet heightening, what's enshrined
Within ;—who by a power unknown to all
Save thee alone, canst bring up at a call
A thousand seeming opposites, entwined
In wondrous brotherhood—fancy, wild wit,
Quips, cranks, and wanton wiles, with deep sweet thought,
And stinging jests, with honey for the wound ;
All blent in intermixture full and fit,—
A banquet for the choicest souls :—can aught
Repay the solace which from thee I've found ?

J. H. (JOHN HUNTER OF CRAIGCROOK)
From *Friendship's Offering*, 1832.

INTRODUCTION

As I have elsewhere told the story of Charles Lamb's life to the best of my ability, I have not thought it necessary, in editing his Letters, to tell it over again in my own words. The letters themselves contain his story—at least from the year when he came of age and began in earnest the battle of his difficult and lonely life. From the year 1796 to a date preceding his death by only a few days, there are few incidents of that life that are not related or referred to in those letters. When read consecutively, and with the help of such supplementary information as can be provided in notes, they form an almost complete biography.

Material for a larger collection of Lamb's Letters has been gradually accumulating since the appearance of Talfourd's well-known volumes—the *Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life*, in 1837, and the *Final Memorials* published after the death of Mary Lamb in 1848. It would take long to unfold the complicated history of the various editions of Lamb's correspondence

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that have since appeared. No change in the form of Talfourd's work would seem to have been made until the year 1868, when an edition of the writings of Lamb was published by Mr. Moxon, preceded by a collection of the Letters, freshly arranged according to the persons to whom they were addressed. This edition was in the first instance prefaced by an "Essay on the Genius of Lamb" from the hand of Mr. G. A. Sala. Two years later the first volume was withdrawn, and reissued with a substituted Preface by Mr. Thomas Purnell. This edition was in its turn replaced in 1875 by another in six volumes, bearing the name of the same publishers, and under the editorship of Mr. Percy Fitzgerald. In this last-named edition the narrative portion of Talfourd's two works was retained, digested into one continuous narrative, with additions both in the text and notes. The Letters were separated from Talfourd's original matter, arranged (as in the two preceding editions) in groups—the Letters to Coleridge being followed by those addressed to Southey, and so forth. Mr. Fitzgerald was able to announce that he had added forty new letters to the collection.

More than ten years after Mr. Fitzgerald's edition, Mr. W. C. Hazlitt edited for Mr. George Bell a fresh *Life and Letters*, announced as Talfourd's "carefully revised and greatly enlarged." The edition consists of Talfourd's

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text, freely interspersed with original matter, and the Letters rearranged, with certain additions to their number. The edition has this advantage over Mr. Fitzgerald's in that it aims at giving the Letters in chronological order, and not broken up into groups on any other plan. But I certainly cannot think that Talfourd's work, which, whatever be its defects, has long taken its place as an English Classic, should be re-issued under its author's name after additions and alterations so extensive have been introduced into it. I have preferred, therefore, to omit Talfourd's own narrative altogether, and to print the Letters only, with such additions to their number as I have been fortunate in obtaining, and in chronological order, so far as their dates are discoverable, reserving all elucidatory matter for the notes at the end of the respective volumes.

The editors of Lamb's Letters who have succeeded Talfourd have been, I think, unduly severe upon his methods of procedure. Mr. Fitzgerald, for instance, complains that in Talfourd's hands the Letters were edited "in accordance with his peculiar views—being cut up, altered, and dealt with in very summary fashion." This may be correct, but it should not be forgotten that the former of Talfourd's two works—the Life and Letters published in 1837—was produced under exceptionally difficult circumstances. Charles Lamb's history was bound up with that of his sister, and with the consequences of one

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most terrible event in her life. As long as Mary Lamb survived her brother, no letters, however interesting, which bore upon that calamity or the sacrifices it entailed, or upon the frequent recurrence of the malady in the life of the sister, could be printed without large omissions. Hence the Letters in the volumes of 1837 were in many cases fragments only, and made no claim to be anything else.

After the death of Mary Lamb in 1847 the fuller narrative of the sad fortunes of the brother and sister, vaguely hinted in the Preface to the former volumes, became possible. It is easy to pronounce upon the course Talfourd ought to have pursued. He should have prepared a new edition of his former book, adding new letters and restoring the omitted passages with such additional explanatory matter of his own as would have made the whole intelligible. Talfourd was evidently aware that this would have been the simplest and most satisfactory course, and apologises for not adopting it on the ground that it would be unfair to purchasers of the former work. He therefore chose the alternative plan of a second collection of letters with fresh connecting matter. But unfortunately he too often supplied the missing portions of letters with no indication of those in his former book to which they belonged. This was, beyond all question, a grave error of judgment, and the consequence was that if Talfourd's former work

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had of necessity a "scrappy" character, for reasons that were entitled to all respect, the second work was more fragmentary still. The charge against Talfourd of "cutting and carving" must at least, therefore, be made with due allowance for the difficulties of his position. For Mr. Fitzgerald's further complaint that Talfourd "altered" the Letters, a different defence must be found. It is certainly true that here and there, though very rarely, Lamb makes use in writing of certain freedoms of expression—principally of the expletive kind—which were common enough in letters and in conversation eighty years since, but are now happily out of fashion. If Talfourd, on a principle long ago accepted as sound, that such expletives have "had their day," ventured to soften them down into more harmless equivalents, I yet cannot agree with Mr. Fitzgerald that any serious treason against Lamb was committed in so doing. As to the omissions or changes of other kinds—of passages bearing upon persons then still living, or of intimate confidences as to the writer's own self, the publication of which must always be matter for editorial discretion—Talfourd showed himself neither timid nor capricious. I am not speaking without good reason. The autographs of two of the most important series of letters—those to Manning and those to Bernard Barton—have been in my hands, and except for the mutilations already referred to, made necessary by the Mary

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Lamb difficulty, I can testify that omissions or changes due to Talfourd are not only insignificant in amount, but were at the time amply justifiable. Many of such omissions have been since Talfourd's day supplied, and I have been able to restore some passages and correct others in the present edition.

A more important defect in Talfourd's method as editor must, however, be admitted. It certainly could never have been an easy task to determine the dates of Lamb's various letters. He rarely dated a letter, especially in early life, and postmarks are too often torn or illegible. To arrange the Letters, therefore, in anything like chronological order must have been, as it is still, matter of great difficulty. But Talfourd, we must agree, might have come something nearer to success. Even where the postmarks existed, he does not seem to have noticed them, or to have cared for any more precise reference to a letter than that it was written "about this time." Sometimes, even in the absence of both date and postmark, references in the Letters to incidents in the lives of Lamb or his correspondent might have saved the editor from many errors. A single illustration of this may suffice. In the summer of 1797 Coleridge was living at Nether Stowey, whither he had betaken himself, with his young friend Charles Lloyd, to be near Thomas Poole, who had his tannery hard by. Cruikshank and his wife were there, and Citizen

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Thelwall was not far off. Wordsworth and his sister, from Racedown, were on a visit, and Charles Lamb—little more than a youth of twenty-two—joined the party to spend his brief holiday. It was during this visit that Coleridge, having injured his leg, and being thus prevented from joining his friends in an excursion, stayed at home and wrote the lines, familiar to all lovers of Coleridge and Lamb—"This Lime-tree Bower my prison," containing touching reference to both Lamb and his sister. The poem was printed soon after in the *Annual Anthology* at Bristol, with a prefatory note relating the circumstances. After Lamb's return to London he writes Coleridge a letter (see *Lamb's Letters*, July 1797) referring to this visit, to Coleridge's accident, to Poole, Wordsworth, and the rest, and to the incident of little Hartley Coleridge cutting his teeth. This letter Talfourd placed three years later, in 1800, and no subsequent editor has corrected the mistake. It must be admitted, however, that errors are not always so easy to amend as in this instance. Internal evidence is not always present to supplement the external, and after careful examination and balancing of probabilities, I have had to leave many letters, notably of the period between 1800 and 1802, with many misgivings as to the place finally assigned to them. The originals of the Letters to Coleridge, I should add, are dispersed, and no longer accessible for purposes of collation.

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The autographs of the Manning Letters have been in my hands, through the kindness of their owner, the Rev. C. R. Manning, Rector of Diss, the nephew of the famous orientalist and traveller. Among these I have been so fortunate as to find several not before printed,—one of singular interest, containing Lamb's criticism on the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and an account of the passage at arms between himself and the author of the volume. Talfourd suppressed the letter, there can be no doubt, because Wordsworth was then still living. It came under my notice too late for insertion in its place in the text of the correspondence, but I have found room for it in my notes. Some new letters to Manning of later date will be found in their proper places. The Barton Letters I have also carefully examined with the valuable assistance of Bernard Barton's daughter, Mrs. Edward Fitzgerald, who has also favoured me with much interesting information throwing light upon allusions occurring in the letters. To Mrs. Procter I have to express my warm acknowledgments for entrusting me with the originals of the letters to her husband ("Barry Cornwall"), from which I have been able to make both corrections and additions. To Mrs. Cowden Clarke (the Mary Victoria Novello of the Letters) I am also deeply indebted for her "cordial permission" to include in this edition the Letters of Lamb to her husband, and to her

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father, Vincent Novello, first printed in Mr. and Mrs. Cowden Clarke's interesting *Recollections of Writers*.

Other letters, previously unpublished, will be found in the present edition. A series addressed to Mr. J. B. Dibdin I am able to include, by the kindness of his nephew, Mr. R. W. Dibdin. Readers of Lamb's correspondence may remember a reference to this gentleman, "the grandson of the songster," as having died early of consumption, after seeking in vain the restorative climate of Madeira. I have told in my notes the story of Lamb's chance introduction to the young man, to whom he was thenceforth drawn by kindred literary tastes, and even more by that which always deeply moved Charles Lamb, —the sight of patient suffering or struggle. Mr. Dibdin, a clerk in a city merchant's house, was often obliged to visit some southern watering-place for his health, and most of the present letters were evidently composed by Lamb with the single object of amusing his friend, and relieving for a moment the tedium of his enforced idleness. It is as such that these letters must be judged. If their fun is at times of the most extravagant, the true kindness of heart that prompted them will not be overlooked.

It will be seen that I have not attempted to make this edition of Lamb's Letters "complete," in the sense of having retained all the notes (or "notelets," as they have been called) included

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in former collections. It happens to any man of mark and genius, such as Charles Lamb, that his most trivial notes are naturally preserved by correspondents as autographs, but it assuredly does not follow that they are therefore worth printing. Dozens of hasty notes written by Lamb are extant, but it seems to me little short of an insult to his memory and to his readers to fill page after page with communications, of which the following is a sample :—

“DEAR A.—I am better. Mary quite well. We expected to see you before. I can’t write long letters. So a friendly love to you all.”

At the same time I have not lightly omitted any scrap of a note containing a characteristic flash of humour or felicity of expression, or supplying any link in the chain of incidents that made up his own life or Mary’s. Even now, when finally parting from a task that has employed my leisure for some years, I feel reluctant altogether to omit certain fragments—illustrations of that rare union of tenderness, humour, and invention—that for various reasons have not found a place in the text of these volumes. In an early note to Manning (May 1800) occurs one more of the many touching tributes to his early friend, his “guardian angel”: “I have given up my house and must look out for lodgings. I expect Mary will get better before

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many weeks are gone ; but at present I feel my daily and hourly prop has fallen from me. I totter and stagger with weakness, for nobody can supply her place to me. White has *all kindness*, but not *sympathy*. R. Lloyd, my only correspondent, you except, is a good being, but a weak one. I know not where to look but to you. If you will suffer me to weary your shoulders with part of my burden, I shall write again to let you know how I go on."

He is in a more cheerful mood in another letter of the same year to the same correspondent, in which occurs this passage (not without interest just now in its prophecies and speculations) : "By the way, I am anxious to get specimens of all English turkeys. Pray send me at your leisure separate specimens from every county in Great Britain, including Wales, as I hate nationalities. The Irish turkeys I will let alone till the union is determined." And, finally, I cannot keep back the droll and wonderful imagination of the following—an extract from a letter to Mr. Procter. Lamb, who was himself always writing verses for his young friends' albums, wanted Procter to do the same kind office for a young lady in whose veins was a tinge of blood darker than European. Assuming that Procter might make his verses a vehicle for some compliments, Lamb writes : "And now, Procter, I will tell you a story. Hierocles, the Sicilian Tyrant, who lived in the thirtieth Olympiad,

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just seven hundred and sixty years *ante* A.D., by the Gregorian Computation, having won the Prize in a Race of Mules, besought the Poet Simonides, with the incentive moreover of a donative of 1200 Sesterces, which might be about £12 : 7 : 3¼ of our money, to write him an Olympic Hymn in praise of the mules. But Simonides, declining to vulgarise his Muse with the mention of any such mongrels, the Tyrant (which signifies in the Greek of that age only *king*) rounds him in the ear that he shall have 8000 sesterces if he will touch up his beasts handsomely. Whereupon Simonides—the ‘tender Simonides,’ as antiquity delights to phrase him—began to relent, and stringing his golden lyre begins a lofty ode to the cattle with—

‘Hail! daughters of the swift-winged steed.’

Sinking, you see, one part of their genealogy. Now for the application. What I told you, dear Procter, about my young friend was nothing but the exact truth. But I sunk the circumstance that her mother was a negro, or half-caste—which convinces me, what I always thought, that something of the tender genius of Simonides lives again in my strains. Mary corrects me, and will have it that the lady’s mother was a Hindostanee half-caste, and no negress, but was I to send you wool-gathering over the vast plains watered by the Ganges, or the more bewildering wilds of Timbuctoo, to search for

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images?" There is *genius* in nonsense such as this. I have willingly suppressed no "fooling" of this kind; but notes of invitation to a supper party, or acceptance of one, have no justification for appearing merely because they were once in Charles Lamb's handwriting.

I have elsewhere spoken of the peculiar value and interest of the literary and other criticism scattered through these Letters, and I may be permitted to repeat here a few sentences. It is remarkable that the intellectual accomplishment in Lamb which asserts itself earliest is just that which ordinarily it takes years, with their increased reading and experience, to mature—the critical faculty. Lamb's earliest letters that have survived begin when he was just of age, and his two chief correspondents for the next three years were young men like himself—one his schoolfellow, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, three years his senior; and the other, whom he had come to know through Coleridge, and who was associated with Coleridge by so many ties, Robert Southey. All three were starting on a literary career, full of ambition; two of them with the intention of making it their profession, the other, happily for himself, settling down to that desk in Leadenhall Street which was to prove, though he knew it not, his best blessing and safeguard for thirty years to come. Apart from the family matters—sad and terrible they were—discussed in these Letters, the chief topics

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dealt with are literary and critical. Coleridge and Southey forward to their friend their verses, their lyrics and eclogues, for his judgment and suggestions; and he in turn submits to them his sonnets and elegies, plaintive and tender after his model, William Lisle Bowles. Coleridge and Southey, endowed with a poetic gift far stronger and richer than Lamb's, yet at once recognise in their companion—no University man like themselves, lowly in his home and traditions, humble in his life's occupation—this rare and precious gift of critical insight. These earliest letters of Lamb show how amply justified was their confidence in his powers. If the art or science of poetical criticism could be made matter of instruction, I know no better introduction to the study than these scattered criticisms of his, first upon Coleridge's and Southey's verse, then upon Wordsworth's, and generally upon all poetry ancient or modern quoted or referred to in the Letters. Lamb was one of the very first to detect the great powers and the real importance of Coleridge and Wordsworth before the wit of the Anti-Jacobin and "English Bards" had opened its batteries upon these poets, and while the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* were yet unborn. This boy of twenty-one was already showing that, together with the keenest eye for the weaker side of these poetical reformers, and with a true humourist's enjoyment of what was absurd or puerile in their methods, that enjoy-

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ment in no way disturbed his appreciation of their genius. With all his prejudices and petulances (and Lamb had plenty of these), the distinguishing feature of his critical power is its width and its versatility. The deepest of all his literary affections, that for Milton, no more interfered with his intense enjoyment of Pope, than did his delight in Pope delay for an instant his recognition of the worth of Cowper, Burns, and their successors. Lamb is our best and wholesomest example of that rare capacity for valuing and enjoying one literary school without at the same time disparaging its opposites. And he could recognise that the same writer often rises above, and often sinks below, himself. He laughs as frankly at what was namby-pamby in Coleridge and Wordsworth as he descants with enthusiasm on the *Ancient Mariner* and the "Lines written above Tintern Abbey."

Nor is it only on the great men—the Coleridges and Wordsworths—that Lamb's criticism is so instructive. Scarcely anything was too poor or insignificant, if written by a friend or by one who needed his friendship, for him to exercise his critical faculty upon; and if in the dead waste of Joseph Cottle's blank-verse a redeeming line appears, Lamb detects it on the spot, and by his words of approval almost imprints the stamp of classicality upon the poem. If he says almost the best thing possible about Cervantes, he does not disdain to do the

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same thing for the author of the *Farmer's Boy*. But it is not only about books that Lamb's judgments are so acute. As we pass from letter to letter in this collection, nothing will strike us more than the transition from wildest burlesque to the nicest and most delicate estimates of human conduct. Even in the same letter, as in one to Mr. Basil Montagu on the proposal to erect a monument to Clarkson in his lifetime, the two sides of the writer appear in a contrast almost startling. It is the letter in which he says that he should not like his name to be absent from the list of subscribers, if the project were carried out, but adds, "Otherwise I frankly own that to pillarise a man's good feelings in his lifetime is not to my taste. Monuments to goodness, even after death, are equivocal. Goodness blows no trumpet, nor desires to have it blown. *We should be modest for a modest man*, as he is for himself. The vanities of life—art, poetry, skill military—are subjects for trophies; not the silent thoughts arising in a good man's mind in lonely places." This ethical good taste that appears whenever Lamb's opinion is seriously called for, is one of the many pleasures and surprises, if I am not mistaken, to be enjoyed by those who think of Lamb mainly as a jester, who did not always observe a corresponding moderation in his jests.

In certain respects I have tried to improve upon Talfourd's method as an editor of these

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Letters. But I have little sympathy with those who have spoken slightly of the obligations he has laid upon all lovers of Charles Lamb. Least of all can I understand the covert charges against him of having, in the interest of his friend, over-coloured his virtues or concealed any of his frailties or foibles. When Talfourd put together the *Final Memorials* after the death of Mary Lamb in 1847, he attempted a fresh estimate of Lamb's character, as affected by the evidence of facts then for the first time published to the world. He headed these last pages, "Lamb fully known." I believe that those who know Lamb best must acknowledge both the generosity and the discriminating justice of this estimate. It may be true that a certain daintiness, a certain hothouse flavour, in Talfourd's style is a little out of keeping with his subject, but it certainly is not for the critical fashions of this age to look back scornfully on the "preciosity" of forty years since. But if Talfourd wraps up his judgments with something of an over-elegant elaboration, these judgments appear to me for the most part admirable. And although the number of Lamb's collected letters has largely grown in the last forty years, and his scattered writings have been collected and published, no record has "leaped to light" which need in any degree modify the estimate then formed.

It was remarked by Mr. Sala, that among the

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reasons for Lamb's memory enduring among us, is the circumstance that "he was passionately loved by his friends. He had, not one, but half-a-dozen Boswells." This is certainly true. We know Lamb as he was known to troops of friends the most various in character and genius. Either in prose or verse, or both, we possess descriptions, estimates, anecdotes of Lamb from Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hood, Procter, Landor, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Talfourd, Patmore, and many others ; and through all these eyes, we see one and the same man. The same rare and sterling qualities impress all these alike. There are some forgotten verses by that friend of Lamb's earlier days, Charles Lloyd, written in 1820,—verses often obscure and sounding curious depths of bathos, but not without gleams of poetry and genuine insight. They are called "Desultory thoughts in London," and include, among other such thoughts, an elaborate tribute to Coleridge, and a description of Lloyd's other dearest friend, Charles Lamb. No names are mentioned, but the allusions are unmistakable. Lloyd could only then hint at the sorrows of his friend's early life :—

" He walked along his path in steadiness,
In solitude, and in sublimity ;
None ever knew his desolate distress,
And none shall ever know it now from me."

And when, after many stanzas of strange digression, he comes back to his theme :

INTRODUCTION

“And now, my friend, I turn again to thee,
Thou pure receptacle of all that's good !”

he admits that Lamb has “contrived an art” he had never conceived as possible :

“The child of impulse ever to appear,
And yet through duty's path strictly to steer.

Nay more, thou hast contrived *to be* that child,
And not alone hast held, through duty's path,
In lofty unimpeachableness, and mild,
Thy way—but through strange suffering and scathe
Of worldly comfort, hast been unbeguiled
Of life's first innocence :—God's blessing hath—
Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—
Through fiery furnace made thee safely go.”

There is no mistaking tributes such as these for the mere language of literary compliment. There was no conspiracy among Landor and Lloyd, Wordsworth and Thomas Hood, Coleridge and Procter, to uphold the reputation of a favourite member of their clique. When we read such words, we know that they mean what they say, and that they are true. And it is because I believe that Talfourd justly interpreted the character of his hero, and was in full harmony with the judgments of those other friends of Lamb, that I have ventured to add these few words in his vindication.

To the names already mentioned of those to whom I am indebted for many kind services, I must add that of Mr. George Bentley of New Burlington Street, for the use of an unpublished

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letter ; of Mr. C. Kegan Paul, for permission to include the Letters of Lamb to Godwin, originally printed in Mr. Paul's *Life of William Godwin* ; of Messrs. Longmans, and the editor of the *Century Magazine* and Mr. R. S. Chilton, for a like permission to use letters addressed respectively to Miss Matilda Betham and to Mr. John Howard Payne. Mr. B. M'George of Glasgow kindly collated two of the letters here given with originals in his possession ; and my old friend Dr. Edward Calvert of Shrewsbury has taken a lively interest in extracting meanings and allusions from some of Lamb's rather frolicsome Latin. And I owe a final word of special gratitude to Mr. James Dykes Campbell, who has allowed me to consult him throughout, and whose minute and exact knowledge of all matters touching Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Lamb, has materially enriched my notes.

ALFRED AINGER.

HAMPSTEAD,
November 1887.

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

THE present edition of Charles Lamb's Letters makes no claim to be complete. Indeed, no such result is attainable at the present moment, or at any future time. There may be, and probably are, many letters of Lamb's dispersed throughout the world, which have never seen the light of print. I myself know of a whole series, of great interest, in the possession of a family who, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, will not consent to their publication. In the meantime, however, I am glad to have been able to make some important additions to the collection originally edited by me. The very interesting series of letters to Robert Lloyd and his father, contained in the volume *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds*, edited by Mr. E. V. Lucas, are now, by arrangement with the publishers, Messrs. Smith and Elder, included in these volumes, and inserted in their proper places. For various other letters I am indebted to the courtesy of friends and correspondents ; and among them I

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must mention Sir Edmund Elton of Clevedon Court, and Miss Gutch, niece of Lamb's friend, John Mathew Gutch. Certain letters which I was constrained in my previous edition to place in the Notes, because they had reached me too late for insertion in the text, are now placed there in their due position. Others again, the exact dates of which have been discovered since my former edition was published, have been rearranged in chronological order; and as I have been able to correct many misreadings and misprints in the text, and to embody in the Notes much new information of interest, I hope I may claim that the present edition, though far from perfect, is a real improvement on its predecessor.

In concluding my task, I take this opportunity of acknowledging the kindness of the late Miss M. L. Field, of Hastings, for the use of an epilogue by Lamb, written for an amateur performance of *Richard II.*, in which her family took part. I have also to thank Miss Warter, Southey's granddaughter, for a copy of Southey's reply to Lamb's well-known letter of remonstrance, on occasion of Southey's criticism of Elia in the *Quarterly Review*. And I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Dykes Campbell, for access to a series of my volumes of Lamb in which my lamented friend, her husband, had made many marginal corrections and suggestions that have been of real value to me.

PREFACE

In revising the text for this large-paper edition of Lamb's Life, Works, and Letters, I have seen no reason to depart from the principle on which I had previously acted, of not including among his writings certain fragments which had been left as such by their author, because he had (to repeat a sentence of my own already printed) "tired of his task, or found that he had misconceived his powers." Accordingly, a brief chapter of a proposed novel, and a half-written version in prose of a poem by Thomas Hood, will still be missed by those critics who habitually search first in such a collection for what has been omitted. And once again, I would venture to submit that in editing the letters of a distinguished author, it is at once a disrespect to his memory and an affront to his readers to include Notes, of three lines long, containing an invitation to supper, or a reminder of some outstanding engagement.

ALFRED AINGER.

THE TEMPLE,
Xmas. 1899.

CHAPTER I

1796—1800

LETTERS TO COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY,
AND MANNING

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER I.]

May 27, 1796.

Dear Coleridge — Make yourself perfectly easy about May. I paid his bill when I sent your clothes. I was flush of money, and am so still to all the purposes of a single life ; so give yourself no further concern about it. The money would be superfluous to me if I had it.

When Southey becomes as modest as his predecessor, Milton, and publishes his Epics in duodecimo, I will read 'em ; a guinea a book is somewhat exorbitant, nor have I the opportunity of borrowing the work. The extracts from it in the *Monthly Review*, and the short passages in your *Watchman*, seem to me much superior to any thing in his partnership account with Lovell. Your poems I shall

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procure forthwith. There were noble lines in what you inserted in one of your Numbers from *Religious Musings*; but I thought them elaborate. I am somewhat glad you have given up that paper: it must have been dry, unprofitable, and of "dissonant mood" to your disposition. I wish you success in all your undertakings, and am glad to hear you are employed about the *Evidences of Religion*. There is need of multiplying such books a hundredfold in this philosophical age, to *prevent* converts to atheism, for they seem too tough disputants to meddle with afterwards.

Le Grice is gone to make puns in Cornwall. He has got a tutorship to a young boy living with his mother, a widow lady. He will, of course, initiate him quickly in "whatsoever things are honest, lovely, and of good report." He has cut Miss Hunt completely: the poor girl is very ill on the occasion; but he laughs at it, and justifies himself by saying, "she does not see me laugh." Coleridge, I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a madhouse, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was; and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make a volume, if all were told. My Sonnets

TO COLERIDGE

I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you. I am beginning a poem in blank verse, which, if I finish, I publish. White is on the eve of publishing (he took the hint from *Vortigern*) "Original letters of Falstaff, Shallow," etc. ; a copy you shall have when it comes out. They are without exception the best imitations I ever saw. Coleridge, it may convince you of my regards for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy.

The Sonnet I send you has small merit as poetry ; but you will be curious to read it when I tell you it was written in my prison-house in one of my lucid intervals.

TO MY SISTER

If from my lips some angry accents fell,
Peevish complaint, or harsh reproof unkind,
'Twas but the error of a sickly mind
And troubled thoughts, clouding the purer well
And waters clear of Reason ; and for me,
Let this my verse the poor atonement be—
My verse, which thou to praise wert e'er inclined
Too highly, and with a partial eye to see
No blemish. Thou to me didst ever show
Kindest affection ; and would'st oft-times lend
An ear to the desponding love-sick lay,
Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

With these lines, and with that sister's kindest remembrances to C——, I conclude.

Yours sincerely,

LAMB.

Your *Conciones ad Populum* are the most eloquent politics that ever came in my way.

Write when convenient—not as a task, for there is nothing in this letter to answer.

We cannot send our remembrances to Mrs. C., not having seen her, but believe me our best good wishes attend you both.

My civic and poetic compliments to Southey if at Bristol. Why, he is a very Leviathan of Bards!—the small minnow, I!

LETTER II.]

June 1796.

I am in such violent pain with the headache, that I am fit for nothing but transcribing, scarce for that. When I get your poems, and the *Joan of Arc*, I will exercise my presumption in giving you my opinion of 'em. The mail does not come in before to-morrow (Wednesday) morning. The following Sonnet was composed during a walk down into Hertfordshire early in last Summer :—

The Lord of Light shakes off his drowsyhed.
Fresh from his couch up springs the lusty sun,
And girds himself his mighty race to run ;
Meantime, by truant love of rambling led,
I turn my back on thy detested walls,
Proud City, and thy sons I leave behind,
A selfish, sordid, money-getting kind,

TO COLERIDGE

Who shut their ears when holy Freedom calls.
I pass not thee so lightly, humble spire,
That mindest me of many a pleasure gone,
Of merriest days, of Love and Islington,
Kindling anew the flames of past desire ;
And I shall muse on thee, slow journeying on,
To the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.

The last line is a copy of Bowles's, "To the green Hamlet in the peaceful Plain." Your ears are not so very fastidious ; many people would not like words so prosaic and familiar in a Sonnet as Islington and Hertfordshire. The next was written within a day or two of the last, on revisiting a spot where the scene was laid of my first Sonnet that "mock'd my step with many a lonely glade."

When last I roved these winding wood-walks green,
Green winding walks, and shady pathways sweet,
Oft-times would Anna seek the silent scene,
Shrouding her beauties in the lone retreat.
No more I hear her footsteps in the shade ;
Her image only in these pleasant ways
Meets me, self-wandering, where in happier days
I held free converse with my fair-hair'd maid.
I pass'd the little cottage which she loved,
The cottage which did once my all contain :
It spake of days that ne'er must come again ;
Spake to my heart, and much my heart was moved.
Now "fair befall thee, gentle maid," said I ;
And from the cottage turn'd me with a sigh.

The next retains a few lines from a Sonnet of mine which you once remarked had no "body of thought" in it. I agree with you,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

but have preserved a part of it, and it runs thus. I flatter myself you will like it:—

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loth to meet the rudeness of men's sight
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steeps in kind oblivious ecstasy
The care-crazed mind, like some still melody :
Speaking most plain the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite, peace and meek quietness,
And innocent loves, and maiden purity :
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends, or Fortune's wrongs unkind ;
Might to sweet deeds of mercy move the heart
Of him who hates his brethren of mankind.
Turn'd are those beams from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

The next and last I value most of all. 'Twas composed close upon the heels of the last, in that very wood I had in mind when I wrote "Methinks how dainty sweet."

We were two pretty babes, the youngest she,
The youngest, and the loveliest far, I ween,
And Innocence her name. The time has been
We two did love each other's company ;
Time was, we two had wept to have been apart :
But when, with show of seeming good beguiled,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart,
My loved companion dropp'd a tear and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved ! who can tell me where thou art—
In what delicious Eden to be found—
That I may seek thee the wide world around ?

Since writing it, I have found in a poem

TO COLERIDGE

by Hamilton of Bangor, these two lines to
"Happiness":—

"Nun, sober and devout, where art thou fled
To hide in shades thy meek, contented head?"

Lines eminently beautiful; but I do not remember having read them previously, for the credit of my tenth and eleventh lines. Parnell has two lines (which probably suggested the above) to "Contentment":

"Whither, ah! whither art thou fled,
To hide thy meek, contented head?"

Cowley's exquisite "Elegy on the death of his friend Harvey," suggested the phrase of "we two."

"Was there a tree that did not know
The love betwixt us two?"

So much for acknowledged plagiarisms, the confession of which I know not whether it has more of vanity or modesty in it. As to my blank verse, I am so dismally slow and sterile of ideas (I speak from my heart) that I much question if it will ever come to any issue. I have hitherto only hammered out a few independent, unconnected snatches, not in a capacity to be sent. I am very ill, and will rest till I have read your poems, for which I am very thankful. I have one more favour to beg of you, that you never mention Mr. May's affair

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

in any sort, much less *think* of repaying. Are we not flocci-nauci-what-d'ye-call-'em-ists? We have just learned that my poor brother has had a sad accident : a large stone, blown down by yesterday's high wind, has bruised his leg in a most shocking manner ; he is under the care of Cruikshanks. Coleridge ! there are 10,000 objections against my paying you a visit at Bristol ; it cannot be else ; but in this world 'tis better not to think too much of pleasant possibles, that we may not be out of humour with present insipids. Should anything bring you to London, you will recollect No. 7, Little Queen Street, Holborn.

I shall be too ill to call on Wordsworth myself, but will take care to transmit him his poem, when I have read it. I saw Le Grice the day before his departure, and mentioned incidentally his "teaching the young idea how to shoot." Knowing him and the probability there is of people having a propensity to pun in his company, you will not wonder that we both stumbled on the same pun at once, he eagerly anticipating me,—“he would teach him to shoot !” Poor Le Grice ! if wit alone could entitle a man to respect, etc., he has written a very witty little pamphlet lately, satirical, upon college declamations. When I send White's book, I will add that. I am sorry there should be any difference between you and Southey. “Between you two there should be peace,” tho'

TO COLERIDGE

I must say I have borne him no good will since he spirited you away from among us. What is become of Moschus? You sported some of his sublimities, I see, in your *Watchman*. Very decent things. So much for to-night from your afflicted, headache, sorethroaty, humble servant,
C. LAMB.

Tuesday Night.—Of your *Watchmen*, the Review of Burke was the best prose. I augured great things from the first Number. There is some exquisite poetry interspersed. I have re-read the extract from the *Religious Musings*, and retract whatever invidious there was in my censure of it as elaborate. There are times when one is not in a disposition thoroughly to relish good writing. I have re-read it in a more favourable moment, and hesitate not to pronounce it sublime. If there be any thing in it approaching to tumidity (which I meant not to infer, by *elaborate* I meant simply laboured), it is the gigantic hyperbole by which you describe the evils of existing society: “snakes, lions, hyenas, and behemoths,” is carrying your resentment beyond bounds. The pictures of “The Simoom,” of “Frenzy and Ruin,” of “The Whore of Babylon,” and “The Cry of the Foul Spirits disherited of Earth,” and “the strange beatitude” which the good man shall recognise in heaven, as well as the particularising of the children of wretchedness (I have

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

unconsciously included every part of it), form a variety of uniform excellence. I hunger and thirst to read the poem complete. That is a capital line in your sixth Number :

“ This dark, frieze-coated, hoarse, teeth-chattering month.”

They are exactly such epithets as Burns would have stumbled on, whose poem on the ploughed-up daisy you seem to have had in mind. Your complaint that of your readers some thought there was too much, some too little original matter in your Numbers, reminds me of poor dead Parsons in the *Critic*. “ Too little incident ! Give me leave to tell you, sir, there is too much incident.” I had like to have forgot thanking you for that exquisite little morsel, the first Sclavonian Song. The expression in the second, —“ more happy to be unhappy in hell ” : is it not very quaint ? Accept my thanks, in common with those of all who love good poetry, for “ The Braes of Yarrow.” I congratulate you on the enemies you must have made by your splendid invective against the barterers in human flesh and sinews. Coleridge, you will rejoice to hear that Cowper is recovered from his lunacy, and is employed on his translation of the Italian, etc., poems of Milton for an edition where Fuseli presides as designer. Coleridge, to an idler like myself, to write and receive letters are both very pleasant ; but I wish not to break in upon your valuable time by expecting

TO COLERIDGE

to hear very frequently from you. Reserve that obligation for your moments of lassitude, when you have nothing else to do ; for your locomotive and all your idle propensities, of course, have given way to the duties of providing for a family. The mail is come in, but no parcel ; yet this is Tuesday. Farewell, then, till tomorrow ; for a niche and a nook I must leave for criticisms. By the way, I hope you do not send your only copy of *Joan of Arc* : I will in that case return it immediately.

Your parcel *is* come : you have been *lavish* of your presents.

Wordsworth's poem I have hurried through, not without delight. Poor Lovell ! my heart almost accuses me for the light manner I lately spoke of him, not dreaming of his death. My heart bleeds for your accumulated troubles : God send you through 'em with patience. I conjure you, dream not that I will ever think of being repaid ; the very word is galling to the ears. I have read all your *Religious Musings* with uninterrupted feelings of profound admiration. You may safely rest your fame on it. The best remaining things are what I have before read, and they lose nothing by my recollection of your manner of reciting 'em, for I too bear in mind "the voice, the look" of absent friends, and can occasionally mimic their manner for the amusement of those who have seen 'em. Your impassioned manner of recitation I can recall

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

at any time to mine own heart and to the ears of the bystanders. I rather wish you had left the monody on Chatterton concluding, as it did, abruptly. It had more of unity. The conclusion of your *Religious Musings*, I fear, will entitle you to the reproof of your beloved woman, who wisely will not suffer your fancy to run riot, but bids you walk humbly with your God. The last words,

“I discipline my young and novice thought
In ministries of heart-stirring song,”

though not now new to me, cannot be enough admired. To speak politely, they are a well-turned compliment to Poetry. I hasten to read *Joan of Arc*, etc. I have read your lines at the beginning of the second book : they are worthy of Milton ; but in my mind yield to your *Religious Musings*. I shall read the whole carefully, and in some future letter take the liberty to particularise my opinions of it. Of what is new to me among your poems next to the “Musings,” that beginning “My Pensive Sara” gave me most pleasure : the lines in it I just alluded to are most exquisite ; they made my sister and self smile, as conveying a pleasing picture of Mrs. C. checking your wild wanderings, which we were so fond of hearing you indulge when among us. It has endeared us more than any thing to your good lady ; and your own self-reproof that follows, delighted us. 'Tis a

TO COLERIDGE

charming poem throughout. (You have well remarked that *charming*, *admirable*, *exquisite* are the words expressive of feelings more than conveying of ideas ; else I might plead very well want of room in my paper as excuse for generalising.) I want room to tell you how we are charmed with your verses in the manner of Spenser, etc., etc., etc., etc., etc. I am glad you resume the *Watchman*. Change the name : leave out all articles of news, and whatever things are peculiar to newspapers, and confine yourself to ethics, verse, criticism ; or, rather do not confine yourself. Let your plan be as diffuse as the *Spectator*, and I'll answer for it the work prospers. If I am vain enough to think I can be a contributor, rely on my inclinations. Coleridge, in reading your *Religious Musings* I felt a transient superiority over you. I *have* seen Priestley. I love to see his name repeated in your writings. I love and honour him, almost profanely. You would be charmed with his *Sermons*, if you never read 'em. You have doubtless read his books illustrative of the doctrine of Necessity. Prefixed to a late work of his, in answer to Paine, there is a Preface, giving an account of the man, and his services to men, written by Lindsey, his dearest friend, well worth your reading.

Tuesday Eve.—Forgive my prolixity, which is yet too brief for all I could wish to say. God give you comfort, and all that are of your house-

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

hold ! Our loves and best good wishes to
Mrs. C. C. LAMB.

LETTER III.]

June 10, 1796.

With *Joan of Arc* I have been delighted, amazed. I had not presumed to expect any thing of such excellence from Southey. Why, the poem is alone sufficient to redeem the character of the age we live in from the imputation of degenerating in Poetry, were there no such beings extant as Burns, and Bowles, Cowper, and — : fill up the blank how you please ; I say nothing. The subject is well chosen. It opens well. To become more particular, I will notice in their order a few passages that chiefly struck me on perusal. Page 26, "Fierce and terrible Benevolence !" is a phrase full of grandeur and originality. The whole context made me feel *possessed*, even like Joan herself. Page 28, "It is most horrible with the keen sword to gore the finely-fibred human frame," and what follows pleased me mightily. In the 2nd Book, the first forty lines in particular are majestic and high-sounding. Indeed the whole vision of the Palace of Ambition and what follows are supremely excellent. Your simile of the Laplander,

. "by Niemi lake
Or Balda Zhiok, or the mossy stone
Of Solfar-kapper,"

TO COLERIDGE

will bear comparison with any in Milton for fulness of circumstance and lofty pacedness of versification. Southey's similes, though many of 'em are capital, are all inferior. In one of his books, the simile of the oak in the storm occurs, I think, four times. To return : the light in which you view the heathen deities is accurate and beautiful. Southey's personifications in this book are so many fine and faultless pictures. I was much pleased with your manner of accounting for the reason why monarchs take delight in war. At the 447th line you have placed Prophets and Enthusiasts cheek by jowl, on too intimate a footing for the dignity of the former. Necessarian-like-speaking, it is correct. Page 98, "Dead is the Douglas ! cold thy warrior frame, illustrious Buchan," etc., are of kindred excellence with Gray's "Cold is Cadwallo's tongue," etc. How famously the Maid baffles the Doctors, Seraphic and Irrefragable, "with all their trumpery !" Page 126, the procession, the appearances of the Maid, of the Bastard Son of Orleans and of Tremouille, are full of fire and fancy, and exquisite melody of versification. The personifications from line 303 to 309, in the heat of the battle, had better been omitted ; they are not very striking, and only encumber. The converse which Joan and Conrade hold on the banks of the Loire is altogether beautiful. Page 313, the conjecture that in dreams "all things are that seem," is one of those conceits which

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

the Poet delights to admit into his creed ; a creed, by the way, more marvellous and mystic than ever Athanasius dreamed of. Page 315, I need only *mention* those lines ending with "She saw a serpent gnawing at her heart !" They are good imitative lines, "he toiled and toiled, of toil to reap no end, but endless toil and never-ending woe." Page 347, Cruelty is such as Hogarth might have painted her. Page 361, all the passage about Love (where he seems to confound conjugal love with creating and preserving love) is very confused, and sickens me with a load of useless personifications ; else that ninth Book is the finest in the volume—an exquisite combination of the ludicrous and the terrible : I have never read either, even in translation, but such as I conceive to be the manner of Dante or Ariosto. The tenth Book is the most languid. On the whole, considering the celerity wherewith the poem was finished, I was astonished at the infrequency of weak lines. I had expected to find it verbose. Joan, I think, does too little in battle ; Dunois perhaps the same ; Conrade too much. The anecdotes interspersed among the battles refresh the mind very agreeably, and I am delighted with the very many passages of simple pathos abounding throughout the poem ; passages which the author of "Crazy Kate" might have written. Has not Master Southey spoke very slightly, in his Preface, and disparagingly of Cowper's

TO COLERIDGE

Homer? What makes him reluctant to give Cowper his fame? And does not Southey use too often the expletives "did," and "does"? They have a good effect at times, but are too inconsiderable, or rather become blemishes, when they mark a style. On the whole, I expect Southey one day to rival Milton: I already deem him equal to Cowper, and superior to all living poets besides. What says Coleridge? The "Monody on Henderson" is *immensely good*: the rest of that little volume is *readable, and above mediocrity*. I proceed to a more pleasant task; pleasant because the poems are yours; pleasant because you impose the task on me; and pleasant, let me add, because it will confer a whimsical importance on me to sit in judgment upon your rhymes. First, though, let me thank you again and again, in my own and my sister's name, for your invitations. Nothing could give us more pleasure than to come, but (were there no other reasons) while my brother's leg is so bad it is out of the question. Poor fellow! he is very feverish and light-headed; but Cruikshanks has pronounced the symptoms favourable, and gives us every hope that there will be no need of amputation: God send, not! We are necessarily confined with him all the afternoon and evening till very late, so that I am stealing a few minutes to write to you.

Thank you for your frequent letters: you are the only correspondent, and I might add, the

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only friend I have in the world. I go nowhere, and have no acquaintance. Slow of speech, and reserved of manners, no one seeks or cares for my society ; and I am left alone. Allen calls very occasionally, as though it were a duty rather, and seldom stays ten minutes. Then judge how thankful I am for your letters ! Do not, however, burthen yourself with the correspondence. I trouble you again so soon, only in obedience to your injunctions. Complaints apart, proceed we to our task. I am called away to tea ; thence must wait upon my brother ; so must delay till to-morrow. Farewell !—*Wednesday.*

Thursday.—I will first notice what is new to me. Thirteenth page : “The thrilling tones that concentrate the soul” is a nervous line ; and the first six lines of page 14 are very pretty ; the twenty-first effusion is a perfect thing. That in the manner of Spenser is very sweet, particularly at the close : the thirty-fifth effusion is most exquisite ; that line in particular, “And, tranquil, muse upon tranquillity.” It is the very reflex pleasure that distinguishes the tranquillity of a thinking being from that of a shepherd, a modern one I would be understood to mean, a Damœtas, one that keeps other people’s sheep. Certainly, Coleridge, your letter from Shurton Bars has less merit than most things in your volume ; personally, it may chime in best with your own feelings, and therefore you love

TO COLERIDGE

it best. It has, however, great merit. In your fourth epistle, *that* is an exquisite paragraph, and fancy-full, of "A stream there is which rolls in lazy flow," etc., etc. "Murmurs sweet under-song 'mid jasmine bowers" is a sweet line ; and so are the three next. The concluding simile is far-fetched—"tempest-honoured" is a quaintish phrase. Of the Monody on Henderson I will here only notice these lines, as superlatively excellent. That energetic one, "Shall I not praise thee, scholar, Christian, friend," like to that beautiful climax of Shakspeare's "King, Hamlet, Royal Dane, Father" ; "yet memory turns from little men to thee," "And sported careless round their fellow child." The whole, I repeat it, is immensely good.

Yours is a poetical family. I was much surprised and pleased to see the signature of Sara to that elegant composition, the fifth epistle. I dare not *criticise* the *Religious Musings* : I like not to select any part, where all is excellent. I can only admire, and thank you for it in the name of a Christian, as well as a lover of good poetry : only let me ask, Is not that thought and those words in Young, "stands in the sun,"—or is it only such as Young, in one of his *better moments*, might have writ ?—

"Believe thou, O my soul,
Life is a vision, shadowy of Truth ;
And vice, and anguish, and the wormy grave,
Shapes of a dream !"

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

I thank you for these lines in the name of a necessarian, and for what follows in the next paragraph, in the name of a child of fancy. After all, you cannot, nor ever will, write anything with which I shall be so delighted as what I have heard yourself repeat. You came to town, and I saw you at a time when your heart was yet bleeding with recent wounds. Like yourself, I was sore galled with disappointed hope. You had

. . . "many an holy lay
That, mourning, soothed the mourner on his way."

I had ears of sympathy to drink them in, and they yet vibrate pleasant on the sense. When I read in your little volume, your nineteenth effusion, or the twenty-eighth or twenty-ninth, or what you call the "Sigh," I think I hear *you* again. I image to myself the little smoky room at the *Salutation and Cat*, where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy. When you left London I felt a dismal void in my heart. I found myself cut off, at one and the same time, from two most dear to me. "How blest with ye the path could I have trod of quiet life!" In your conversation you had blended so many pleasant fancies that they cheated me of my grief. But in your absence the tide of melancholy rushed in again, and did its worst mischief by overwhelming my reason. I have recovered, but feel a stupor that makes me indifferent to

TO COLERIDGE

the hopes and fears of this life. I sometimes wish to introduce a religious turn of mind ; but habits are strong things, and my religious fervours are confined, alas ! to some fleeting moments of occasional solitary devotion. A correspondence, opening with you, has roused me a little from my lethargy, and made me conscious of existence. Indulge me in it : I will not be very troublesome. At some future time I will amuse you with an account, as full as my memory will permit, of the strange turn my frenzy took. I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy ; for, while it lasted, I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad ! All now seems to me vapid, comparatively so. Excuse this selfish digression. Your "Monody" is so superlatively excellent, that I can only wish it perfect, which I can't help feeling it is not quite. Indulge me in a few conjectures. What I am going to propose would make it more compressed, and, I think, more energetic, though I am sensible at the expense of many beautiful lines. Let it begin "Is this the land of song-ennobled line?" and proceed to "Otway's famish'd form"; then, "Thee, Chatterton," to "blaze of Seraphim"; then, "clad in Nature's rich array," to "orient day"; then, "but soon the scathing lightning," to "blighted land"; then, "sublime of thought," to "his bosom glows"; then

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

“But soon upon his poor unshelter’d head
Did Penury her sickly mildew shed :
Ah ! where are fled the charms of vernal Grace,
And Joy’s wild gleams that lighten’d o’er his face ? ”

Then “youth of tumultuous soul ” to “sigh,” as before. The rest may all stand down to “gaze upon the waves below.” What follows now may come next as detached verses, suggested by the Monody, rather than a part of it. They are indeed, in themselves, very sweet :

“And we, at sober eve, would round thee throng
Hanging, enraptured, on thy stately song,”

in particular, perhaps. If I am obscure, you may understand me by counting lines. I have proposed omitting twenty-four lines. I feel that thus compressed it would gain energy, but think it most likely you will not agree with me ; for who shall go about to bring opinions to the bed of Procrustes, and introduce among the sons of men a monotony of identical feelings ? I only propose with diffidence. Reject, if you please, with as little remorse as you would the colour of a coat or the pattern of a buckle, where our fancies differed. The lines “Friend to the Friendless,” etc., which you may think rudely disbranched from the Chatterton, will patch in with the Man of Ross, where they were at once at home, with two more which I recollect,

“And o’er the dowried virgin’s snowy cheek
Bade bridal Love suffuse his blushes meek,”

very beautiful.

TO COLERIDGE

The "Pixies" is a perfect thing ; and so are the "Lines on the Spring," page 28. The "Epitaph on an Infant," like a Jack-o'-lantern, has danced about (or like Dr. Forster's scholars) out of the *Morning Chronicle* into the *Watchman*, and thence back into your Collection. It is very pretty, and you seem to think so ; but, may be, o'erlooked its chief merit, that of filling up a whole page. I had once deemed Sonnets of unrivalled use that way ; but your Epitaphs, I find, are the more diffuse. "Edmund" still holds its place among your best verses. "Ah ! fair delights" to "roses round," in your Poem called "Absence," recall (none more forcibly) to my mind the tones in which *you recited it*. I will not notice, in this tedious (to you) manner, verses which have been so long delightful to me, and which you already know my opinion of. Of this kind are Bowles, Priestley, and that most exquisite and most Bowles-like of all, the nineteenth effusion. It would have better ended with "agony of care" : the last two lines are obvious and unnecessary, and you need not now make fourteen lines of it : now it is rechristened from a Sonnet to an Effusion. Schiller might have written the twentieth Effusion : 'tis worthy of him in any sense. I was glad to meet with those lines you sent me, when my sister was so ill : I had lost the copy, and I felt not a little proud at seeing my name in your verse. The "Complaint of Ninathoma" (first stanza in

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particular) is the best, or only good imitation, of Ossian I ever saw, your "restless gale" excepted. "To an Infant" is most sweet. Is not "foodful," though, very harsh? Would not "dulcet" fruit be less harsh, or some other friendly bisyllable? In "Edmund," "Frenzy, fierce-eyed child," is not so well as "frantic," though that is an epithet adding nothing to the meaning. Slander *couching* was better than "squatting." In the "Man of Ross" it *was* a better line thus:

"If 'neath this roof thy wine-cheer'd moments pass,"

than as it stands now. Time nor nothing can reconcile me to the concluding five lines of "Kosciusko": call it any thing you will but sublime. In my twelfth effusion I had rather have seen what I wrote myself, though they bear no comparison with your exquisite lines—

"On rose-leaf'd beds, amid your faery bowers," etc.

I love my Sonnets because they are the reflected images of my own feelings at different times. To instance, in the thirteenth—

"How reason reel'd," etc.

are good lines, but must spoil the whole with me, who know it is only a fiction of yours, and that the "rude dashings" did in fact not "rock me to repose." I grant the same objection applies not to the former Sonnet; but still I

TO COLERIDGE

love my own feelings : they are dear to memory, though they now and then wake a sigh or a tear. "Thinking on divers things foredone," I charge you, Coleridge, spare my ewe lambs ; and though a gentleman may borrow six lines in an epic poem (I should have no objection to borrow five hundred, and without acknowledging), still, in a sonnet, a personal poem, I do not "ask my friend the aiding verse." I would not wrong your feelings by proposing any improvements (did I think myself capable of suggesting 'em) in such personal poems as "Thou bleedest, my poor heart!"—'od so,—I am caught—I have already done it ; but that simile I propose abridging, would not change the feeling or introduce any alien ones. Do you understand me ? In the twenty-eighth, however, and in the "Sigh," and that composed at Clevedon, things that come from the heart direct, not by the medium of the fancy, I would not suggest an alteration. When my blank verse is finished, or any long fancy-poems, *propino tibi alterandum, cut-up-andum, abridgandum*, just what you will with it ; but spare my ewe lambs ! That to Mrs. Siddons, now, you were welcome to improve, if it had been worth it ; but I say unto you again, Coleridge, spare my ewe lambs ! I must confess were they mine, I should omit, *in editione secundâ*, Effusions two and three, because satiric, and below the dignity of the poet of *Religious Musings*, fifth, seventh, half of the

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eighth, that "Written in early youth," as far as "thousand eyes,"—though I part not unreluctantly with that lively line—

"Chaste joyance dancing in her bright blue eyes,"

and one or two more just thereabouts. But I would substitute for it that sweet poem called "Recollection," in the fifth Number of the *Watchman*; better, I think, than the remainder of this poem, though not differing materially: as the poem now stands it looks altogether confused. And do not omit those lines upon the "Early Blossom," in your sixth Number of the *Watchman*: and I would omit the tenth Effusion or, what would do better, alter and improve the last four lines. In fact, I suppose, if they were mine, I should *not* omit 'em. But your verse is, for the most part, so exquisite, that I like not to see aught of meaner matter mixed with it. Forgive my petulance, and often, I fear, ill-founded criticisms; and forgive me that I have, by this time, made your eyes and head ache with my long letter; but I cannot forego hastily the pleasure and pride of thus conversing with you. You did not tell me whether I was to include the *Conciones ad Populum* in my remarks on your poems. They are not unfrequently sublime; and I think you could not do better than to turn 'em into verse, if you have nothing else to do. Allen, I am sorry to say, is a *confirmed* Atheist. Stoddart, a cold-

TO COLERIDGE

hearted, well-bred, conceited disciple of Godwin, does him no good. His wife has several daughters (one of 'em as old as himself). Surely there is something unnatural in such a marriage.

How I sympathise with you on the dull duty of a reviewer, and heartily damn with you Ned Evans and the Prosodist. I shall, however, wait impatiently for the articles in the *Critical Review*, next month, because they are *yours*. Young Evans (W. Evans, a branch of a family you were once so intimate with) is come into our office, and sends his love to you! Coleridge, I devoutly wish that Fortune, who has made sport with you so long, may play one freak more, —throw you into London, or some spot near it, and there snug-ify you for life. 'Tis a selfish, but natural wish for me, cast as I am “on life's wide plain, friendless.” Are you acquainted with Bowles? I see, by his last Elegy (written at Bath), you are near neighbours.—*Thursday*.

“And I can think I can see the groves again —was it the voice of thee—turns not the voice of thee, my buried friend—who dries with her dark locks the tender tear,” are touches as true to Nature as any in his other Elegy, written at the Hot Wells, about poor Russell, etc. You are doubtless acquainted with it.

I do not know that I entirely agree with you in your stricture upon my Sonnet “To Innocence.” To men whose hearts are not quite deadened by their commerce with the world,

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innocence (no longer familiar) becomes an awful idea. So I felt when I wrote it. Your other censures (qualified and sweetened, though, with praises somewhat extravagant) I perfectly coincide with ; yet I choose to retain the word "lunar." Indulge a "lunatic" in his loyalty to his mistress the Moon. I have just been reading a most pathetic copy of verses on Sophia Pringle, who was hanged and burnt for coining. One of the strokes of pathos (which are very many, all somewhat obscure) is "She lifted up her guilty forger to heaven." A note explains, by "forger," her right hand, with which she forged or coined the base metal ! For "pathos" read bathos. You have put me out of conceit with my blank verse by your *Religious Musings*. I think it will come to nothing. I do not like 'em enough to send 'em. I have just been reading a book which I may be too partial to, as it was the delight of my childhood ; but I will recommend it to you : it is Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*. All the scientific part you may omit in reading. The dialogue is very simple, full of pastoral beauties, and will charm you. Many pretty old verses are interspersed. This letter, which would be a week's work reading only, I do not wish you to answer it in less than a month. I shall be richly content with a letter from you some day early in July ; though, if you get any how *settled* before then, pray let me know it immediately ; 'twould give me so much

TO COLERIDGE

satisfaction. Concerning the Unitarian chapel, the salary is the only scruple that the most rigid moralist would admit as valid. Concerning the tutorage, is not the salary low, and absence from your family unavoidable? London is the only fostering soil for genius. Nothing more occurs just now; so I will leave you, in mercy, one small white spot empty below, to repose your eyes upon, fatigued as they must be with the wilderness of words they have by this time painfully travelled through. God love you, Coleridge, and prosper you through life; though mine will be loss if your lot is to be cast at Bristol, or at Nottingham, or anywhere but London. Our loves to Mrs. C——. C. L.

Friday, 10th June 1796.

LETTER IV.]

Monday Night, June 13, 1796.

Unfurnished at present with any sheet-filling subject, I shall continue my letter gradually and journal-wise. My second thoughts entirely coincide with your comments on *Joan of Arc*, and I can only wonder at my childish judgment which overlooked the 1st book, and could prefer the 9th: not that I was insensible to the soberer beauties of the former; but the latter caught me with its glare of magic: the former, however, left a more pleasing general recollection in my mind. Let me add, the 1st book was the favourite of my sister; and *I* now, with Joan,

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often "think on Domremi and the fields of Arc." I must not pass over without acknowledging my obligations to your full and satisfactory account of personifications. I have read it again and again, and it will be a guide to my future taste. Perhaps I had estimated Southey's merits too much by number, weight, and measure. I now agree completely and entirely in your opinion of the genius of Southey. Your own image of Melancholy is illustrative of what you teach, and in itself masterly. I conjecture it is "disbranched" from one of your embryo "hymns." When they are mature of birth (were I you) I should print 'em, in one separate volume, with *Religious Musings* and your part of the *Joan of Arc*. Birds of the same soaring wing should hold on their flight in company. Once for all (and by renewing the subject you will only renew in me the condemnation of Tantalus), I hope to be able to pay you a visit (if you are then at Bristol) some time in the latter end of August or beginning of September, for a week or fortnight: before that time office business puts an absolute veto on my coming.

"And if a sigh that speaks regret of happier times appear,
A glimpse of joy that we have met shall shine and dry the
tear."

Of the blank verses I spoke of, the following lines are the only tolerably complete ones I have writ out of not more than one hundred and fifty.

TO COLERIDGE

That I get on so slowly you may fairly impute to want of practice in composition, when I declare to you that (the few verses which you have seen excepted) I have not writ fifty lines since I left school. It may not be amiss to remark that my grandmother (on whom the verses are written) lived housekeeper in a family the fifty or sixty last years of her life — that she was a woman of exemplary piety and goodness — and for many years before her death was terribly afflicted with a cancer in her breast, which she bore with true Christian patience. You may think that I have not kept enough apart the ideas of her heavenly and her earthly master ; but recollect I have designedly given in to her own way of feeling ; and if she had a failing 'twas that she respected her master's family too much, not revered her Maker too little. The lines begin imperfectly, as I may probably connect 'em if I finish at all : and if I do, Biggs shall print 'em (in a more economical way than you yours), for, Sonnets and all, they won't make a thousand lines as I propose completing 'em, and the substance must be wire-drawn.

LETTER V.]

Tuesday Evening, June 14, 1796.

I am not quite satisfied now with the Chatterton, and, with your leave, will try my hand at it again. A master joiner, you know, may leave a cabinet to be finished by his journeyman, when his own hands are full.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

To your list of illustrative personifications, into which a fine imagination enters, I will take leave to add the following from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wife for a Month*; 'tis the conclusion of a description of a sea fight:—"The game of *death* was never played so nobly: the meagre thief grew wanton in his mischiefs; and his shrunk, hollow eyes smiled on his ruins." There is fancy in these of a lower order, from *Bonduca*;—"Then did I see these valiant men of Britain, like boding owls creep into tods of ivy, and hoot their fears to one another nightly." Not that it is a personification; only it just caught my eye in a little extract book I keep, which is full of quotations from Beaumont and Fletcher in particular, in which authors I can't help thinking there is a greater richness of poetical fancy than in any one, Shakspeare excepted. Are you acquainted with Massinger? At a hazard I will trouble you with a passage from a play of his called *A Very Woman*. The lines are spoken by a lover (disguised) to his faithless mistress. You will remark the fine effect of the double endings. You will by your ear distinguish the lines, for I write 'em as prose. "Not far from where my father lives, *a lady*, a neighbour by, blest with as great a *beauty* as Nature durst bestow without *undoing*, dwelt, and most happily, as I thought then, and blest the house a thousand times she *dwelt* in. This beauty, in the blossom of my youth, when my first fire knew no adulterate

TO COLERIDGE

incense, nor I no way to flatter but my *fondness*; in all the bravery my friends could *show me*, in all the faith my innocence could *give me*, in the best language my true tongue could *tell me*, and all the broken sighs my sick heart *lend me*, I sued and served. Long did I serve this *lady*, long was my travail, long my trade to *win her*: with all the duty of my soul I SERVED HER." "Then she must love." "She did, but never me: she could not *love me*; she would not love, she hated, —more, she *scorn'd me*; and in so poor and base a way *abused me* for all my services, for all my *bounties*, so bold neglects flung on me." "What out of love, and worthy love, I *gave her* (shame to her most unworthy mind!), to fools, to girls, to fiddlers, and her boys she flung, all in disdain of me." One more passage strikes my eye from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Palamon and Arcite*. One of 'em complains in prison:

"This is all our world:
We shall know nothing here but one another;
Hear nothing but the clock that tells our woes.
The vine shall grow, but we shall never see it."

Is not the last circumstance exquisite? I mean not to lay myself open by saying they exceed Milton, and perhaps Collins, in sublimity. But don't you conceive all poets, after Shakspeare, yield to 'em in variety of genius? Massinger treads close on their heels; but you are most probably as well acquainted with his writings as your humble servant. My quotations, in that

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case, will only serve to show my barrenness of matter. Southey, in simplicity and tenderness, is excelled decidedly only, I think, by Beaumont and Fletcher—in his “Maid’s Tragedy” and some parts of “Philaster” in particular, and elsewhere occasionally ; and perhaps by Cowper in his “Crazy Kate,” and in parts of his translation : such as the speeches of Hecuba and Andromache. I long to know your opinion of that translation. The Odyssey especially is surely very Homeric. What nobler than the appearance of Phœbus at the beginning of the Iliad—the lines ending with “Dread sounding, bounding on the silver bow !”

I beg you will give me your opinion of the translation ; it afforded me high pleasure. As curious a specimen of translation as ever fell into my hands is a young man’s in our office, of a French novel. What in the original was literally “amiable delusions of the fancy,” he proposed to render “the fair frauds of the imagination !” I had much trouble in licking the book into any meaning at all. Yet did the knave clear fifty or sixty pounds by subscription and selling the copyright : the book itself not a week’s work ! To-day’s portion of my journalising epistle has been very dull and poverty-stricken. I will here end.

Tuesday Night.—I have been drinking egg-hot and smoking Oronooko (associated circumstances, which ever forcibly recall to my mind

TO COLERIDGE

our evenings and nights at the *Salutation*). My eyes and brain are heavy and asleep, but my heart is awake ; and if words came as ready as ideas, and ideas as feelings, I could say ten hundred kind things. Coleridge, you know not my supreme happiness at having one on earth (though counties separate us) whom I can call a friend. Remember you those tender lines of Logan's ?—

“ Our broken friendships we deplore,
And loves of youth that are no more ;
No after-friendships e'er can raise
Th' endearments of our early days,
And ne'er the heart such fondness prove
As when we first began to love.”

I am writing at random, and half-tipsy, what you may not *equally* understand, as you will be sober when you read it ; but *my* sober and *my* half-tipsy hours you are alike a sharer in. Good-night.

“ Then up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink,
Craigdoroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink.”
BURNS.

Thursday.—I am now in high hopes to be able to visit you, if perfectly convenient on your part, by the end of next month—perhaps the last week or fortnight in July. A change of scene and a change of faces would do me good, even if that scene were not to be Bristol, and those faces Coleridge's and his friends. In the words of Terence, a little altered, *Tædet me hujus quotidiani mundi*, I am heartily sick of the every-

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

day scenes of life. I shall half wish you unmarried (don't show this to Mrs. C.) for one evening only, to have the pleasure of smoking with you and drinking egg-hot in some little smoky room in a pot-house, for I know not yet how I shall like you in a decent room and looking quite happy. My best love and respects to Sara notwithstanding.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES LAMB.

LETTER VI.]

July 1, 1796.

The first moment I can come I will ; but my hopes of coming yet a while yet hang on a ticklish thread. The coach I come by is immaterial, as I shall so easily, by your direction, find ye out. My mother is grown so entirely helpless (not having any use of her limbs) that Mary is necessarily confined from ever sleeping out, she being her bed-fellow. She thanks you though, and will accompany me in spirit. Most exquisite are the lines from Withers. Your own lines, introductory to your poem on "Self," run smoothly and pleurably, and I exhort you to continue 'em. What shall I say to your "Dactyls"? They are what you would call good *per se* ; but a parody on some of 'em is just now suggesting itself, and you shall have it rough and unlicked. I mark with figures the lines parodied :—

TO COLERIDGE

- 4.—Sorely your Dactyls do drag along limp-footed.
- 5.—Sad is the measure that hangs a clod round 'em so.
- 6.—Meagre and languid, proclaiming its wretchedness.
- 1.—Weary, unsatisfied, not little sick of 'em.
- 11.—Cold is my tired heart, I have no charity.
- 2.—Painfully travelling thus over the rugged road.
- 7.—O begone, measure, half Latin, half English, then.
- 12.—Dismal your Dactyls are, God help ye, rhyming ones !

I possibly may not come this fortnight ; therefore all thou hast to do is not to look for me any particular day, only to write word immediately, if at any time you quit Bristol, lest I come and Taffy be not at home. I *hope* I can come in a day or two ; but young Savory, of my office, is suddenly taken ill in this very nick of time, and I must officiate for him till he can come to work again. Had the knave gone sick, and died, and putrefied, at any other time, philosophy might have afforded one comfort ; but just now I have no patience with him. Quarles I am as great a stranger to as I was to Withers. I wish you would try and do something to bring our elder bards into more general fame. I writhe with indignation when, in books of criticism, where commonplace quotation is heaped upon quotation, I find no mention of such men as Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher,—men with whom succeeding dramatic writers (Otway alone excepted) can bear no manner of comparison. Stupid Knox hath noticed none of 'em among his extracts.

Thursday.—Mrs. C—— can scarce guess how

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

she has gratified me by her very kind letter and sweet little poem. I feel that I *should* thank her in rhyme ; but she must take my acknowledgment, at present, in plain honest prose. The uncertainty in which I yet stand, whether I can come or no, damps my spirits, reduces me a degree below prosaical, and keeps me in a suspense that fluctuates between hope and fear. Hope is a charming, lively, blue-eyed wench, and I am always glad of her company, but could dispense with the visitor she brings with her—her younger sister, Fear,—a white-livered, lily-cheeked, bashful, palpitating, awkward hussy, that hangs, like a green girl, at her sister's apron-strings, and will go with her whithersoever *she* goes. For the life and soul of me I could not improve those lines in your poem on the Prince and Princess ; so I changed them to what you bid me, and left 'em at Perry's. I think 'em altogether good, and do not see why you were solicitous about *any* alteration. I have not yet seen, but will make it my business to see, to-day's *Chronicle*, for your verses on Horne Tooke. Dyer stanza'd him in one of the papers t'other day ; but, I think, unsuccessfully. Tooke's friends' meeting was, I suppose, a dinner of condolence. I am not sorry to find you (for all Sara) immersed in clouds of smoke and metaphysics. You know I had a sneaking kindness for this last noble science, and you taught me some smattering of it. I look to become no

TO COLERIDGE

mean proficient under your tuition. Coleridge, what do you mean by saying you wrote to me about Plutarch and Porphyry? I received no such letter, nor remember a syllable of the matter, yet am not apt to forget any part of your epistles, least of all, an injunction like that. I will cast about for 'em, tho' I am a sad hand to know what books are worth, and both worthy gentlemen are alike out of my line. To-morrow I shall be less suspensive, and in better cue to write ; so good-bye at present.

Friday Evening.—That execrable aristocrat and knave, Richardson, has given me an absolute refusal of leave. The *poor man* cannot guess at my disappointment. Is it not hard, “this dread dependance on the low-bred mind”? Continue to write to me tho', and I must be content. Our loves and best good wishes attend upon you both.

LAMB.

Savory did return, but there are two or three more ill and absent, which was the plea for refusing me. I will never commit my peace of mind by depending on such a wretch for a favour in future, so I shall never have heart to ask for holidays again. The man next him in office, Cartwright, furnished him with the objections.

C. LAMB.

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LETTER VII.]

July 5, 1796.

Let us prose.

What can I do till you send word what priced and placed house you should like? Islington, possibly, you would not like; to me 'tis classical ground. Knightsbridge is a desirable situation for the air of the parks. St. George's Fields is convenient for its contiguity to the Bench. Choose! But are you really coming to town? The hope of it has entirely disarmed my petty disappointment of its nettles; yet I rejoice so much on my own account, that I fear I do not feel enough pure satisfaction on yours. Why, surely, the joint editorship of the [*Morning*] *Chronicle* must be a very comfortable and secure living for a man. But should not you read French, or do you? and can you write with sufficient moderation, as 'tis called, when one suppresses the one half of what one feels or could say on a subject, to chime in the better with popular lukewarmness? White's "Letters" are near publication. Could you review 'em, or get 'em reviewed? Are you not connected with the *Critical Review*? His frontispiece is a good conceit: Sir John learning to dance to please Madame Page, in dress of doublet, etc., from the upper half; and modern pantaloons, with shoes, etc., of the eighteenth century, from the lower half; and the whole work is full of goodly quips and rare fancies, "all deftly masqued like

TO COLERIDGE

hoar antiquity"—much superior to Dr. Kenrick's *Falstaff's Wedding*, which you may have seen. Allen sometimes laughs at superstition, and religion, and the like. A living fell vacant lately in the gift of the Hospital: White informed him that he stood a fair chance for it. He scrupled and scrupled about it, and at last, to use his own words, "tampered" with Godwin to know whether the thing was honest or not. Godwin said nay to it, and Allen rejected the living! Could the blindest poor papist have bowed more servilely to his priest or casuist? Why sleep the *Watchman's* answers to that Godwin? I beg you will not delay to alter, if you mean to keep, those last lines I sent you. Do that, and read these for your pains:—

TO THE POET COWPER

Cowper, I thank my God that thou art heal'd!
Thine was the sorest malady of all;
And I am sad to think that it should light
Upon the worthy head! But thou art heal'd,
And thou art yet, we trust, the destined man,
Born to reanimate the lyre, whose chords
Have slumber'd, and have idle lain so long;
To the immortal sounding of whose strings
Did Milton frame the stately-paced verse;
Among whose wires with light finger playing,
Our elder bard, Spenser, a gentle name,
The lady Muses' dearest darling child,
Elicited the deffest tunes yet heard
In hall or bower, taking the delicate ear
Of Sidney and his peerless Maiden Queen.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Thou, then, take up the mighty epic strain,
Cowper, of England's Bards, the wisest and the best.

1796.

I have read your climax of praises in those three Reviews. These mighty spouters out of panegyric waters have, two of 'em, scattered their spray even upon me, and the waters are cooling and refreshing. Prosaically, the *Monthly* reviewers have made indeed a large article of it, and done you justice. The *Critical* have, in their wisdom, selected not the very best specimens, and notice not, except as one name on the muster-roll, the *Religious Musings*. I suspect Master Dyer to have been the writer of that article, as the substance of it was the very remarks and the very language he used to me one day. I fear you will not accord entirely with my sentiments of Cowper, as *expressed* above (perhaps scarcely just), but the poor gentleman has just recovered from his lunacies, and that begets pity, and pity love, and love admiration ; and then it goes hard with people, but they lie ! Have you read the Ballad called "Leonora," in the second Number of the *Monthly Magazine* ? If you have ! ! ! ! There is another fine song, from the same author (Bürger), in the third Number, of scarce inferior merit ; and (vastly below these) there are some happy specimens of English hexameters, in an imitation of Ossian, in the fifth Number. For your Dactyls—I am sorry

TO COLERIDGE

you are so sore about 'em—a very Sir Fretful! In good troth, the Dactyls are good Dactyls, but their measure is naught. Be not yourself “half anger, half agony,” if I pronounce your darling lines not to be the best you ever wrote—you have written much.

Have a care, good Master poet, of the Statute *de Contumeliâ*. What do you mean by calling Madame Mara “harlot” and other naughty things? The goodness of the verse would not save you in a Court of Justice. But are you really coming to town? Coleridge, a gentleman called in London lately from Bristol, and inquired whether there were any of the family of a Mr. Chambers living: this Mr. Chambers, he said, had been the making of a friend's fortune, who wished to make some return for it. He went away without seeing her. Now, a Mrs. Reynolds, a very intimate friend of ours, whom you have seen at our house, is the only daughter, and all that survives, of Mr. Chambers; and a very little supply would be of service to her, for she married very unfortunately, and has parted with her husband. Pray find out this Mr. Pember (for that was the gentleman's friend's name); he is an attorney, and lives at Bristol. Find him out, and acquaint him with the circumstances of the case, and offer to be the medium of supply to Mrs. Reynolds, if he chooses to make her a present. She is in very distressed circumstances. Mr. Pember, attorney, Bristol. Mr. Chambers

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

lived in the Temple ; Mrs. Reynolds, his daughter, was my schoolmistress, and is in the room at this present writing. This last circumstance induced me to write so soon again. I have not further to add. Our loves to Sara. C. LAMB.

Thursday.

LETTER VIII.]

September 27, 1796.

My dearest Friend—White, or some of my friends, or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines :—My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses : I eat, and drink, and sleep, and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris, of the Bluecoat School, has been very very kind to us, and we have no other friend ; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me “the former things are passed away,”

TO COLERIDGE

and I have something more to do than to feel.

God Almighty have us all in His keeping !

C. LAMB.

Mention nothing of poetry. I have destroyed every vestige of past vanities of that kind. Do as you please, but if you publish, publish mine (I give free leave) without name or initial, and never send me a book, I charge you.

Your own judgment will convince you not to take any notice of this yet to your dear wife. You look after your family ; I have my reason and strength left to take care of mine. I charge you, don't think of coming to see me. Write. I will not see you if you come. God Almighty love you and all of us !

C. LAMB.

LETTER IX.]

October 3, 1796.

My dearest Friend—Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. It will be a comfort to you, I know, to know that our prospects are somewhat brighter. My poor dear, dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments on our house, is restored to her senses,—to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind, and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), but tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her. I found her, this morning, calm and serene ; far, very very far from an indecent forgetful serenity : she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened. Indeed, from the beginning—frightful and hopeless as her disorder seemed—I had confidence enough in her strength of mind and religious principle, to look forward to a time when *even she* might recover tranquillity. God be praised, Coleridge ! wonderful as it is to tell, I have never once been otherwise than collected and calm ; even on the dreadful day, and in the midst of the terrible scene, I preserved a tranquillity which bystanders may have construed into indifference—a tranquillity not of despair. Is it folly or sin in me to say that it was a religious principle that *most* supported me ? I allow much to other favourable circumstances. I felt that I had something else to do than to regret. On that first evening my aunt was lying insensible—to all appearance like one dying ; my father, with his poor forehead plaistered over from a wound he had received from a daughter, dearly loved by him, and who loved him no less dearly ; my mother a dead and murdered corpse in the next room ; yet was I wonderfully supported. I closed not my eyes in sleep that night, but lay without terrors and without despair. I have lost no sleep since. I

TO COLERIDGE

had been long used not to rest in things of sense, —had endeavoured after a comprehension of mind, unsatisfied with the “ignorant present time”; and *this* kept me up. I had the whole weight of the family thrown on me; for my brother, little disposed (I speak not without tenderness for him) at any time to take care of old age and infirmities, had now, with his bad leg, an exemption from such duties, and I was now left alone. One little incident may serve to make you understand my way of managing my mind: Within a day or two after the fatal one, we dressed for dinner a tongue, which we had had salted for some weeks in the house. As I sat down, a feeling like remorse struck me: this tongue poor Mary got for me; and can I partake of it now, when she is far away? A thought occurred and relieved me:—if I give in to this way of feeling, there is not a chair, a room, an object in our rooms, that will not awaken the keenest griefs. I must rise above such weaknesses. I hope this was not want of true feeling. I did not let this carry me, though, too far. On the very second day (I date from the day of horrors), as is usual in such cases, there were a matter of twenty people, I do think, supping in our room: they prevailed on me to eat *with them* (for to eat I never refused). They were all making merry in the room! Some had come from friendship, some from busy curiosity, and some from interest. I

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

was going to partake with them, when my recollection came that my poor dead mother was lying in the next room—the very next room ;—a mother who, through life, wished nothing but her children's welfare. Indignation, the rage of grief, something like remorse, rushed upon my mind. In an agony of emotion I found my way mechanically to the adjoining room, and fell on my knees by the side of her coffin, asking forgiveness of Heaven, and sometimes of her, for forgetting her so soon. Tranquillity returned, and it was the only violent emotion that mastered me. I think it did me good.

I mention these things because I hate concealment, and love to give a faithful journal of what passes within me. Our friends have been very good. Sam Le Grice, who was then in town, was with me the first three or four days, and was as a brother to me ; gave up every hour of his time, to the very hurting of his health and spirits, in constant attendance and humouring my poor father ; talked with him, read to him, played at cribbage with him (for so short is the old man's recollection, that he was playing at cards, as though nothing had happened, while the coroner's inquest was sitting over the way !) Samuel wept tenderly when he went away, for his mother wrote him a very severe letter on his loitering so long in town, and he was forced to go. Mr. Norris, of Christ's Hospital, has been as a father to me—Mrs. Norris as a mother ;

TO COLERIDGE

though we had few claims on them. A gentleman, brother to my godmother, from whom we never had right or reason to expect any such assistance, sent my father twenty pounds; and to crown all these God's blessings to our family at such a time, an old lady, a cousin of my father and aunt's, a gentlewoman of fortune, is to take my aunt and make her comfortable for the short remainder of her days. My aunt is recovered, and as well as ever, and highly pleased at thoughts of going—and has generously given up the interest of her little money (which was formerly paid my father for her board) wholly and solely to my sister's use. Reckoning this, we have, Daddy and I, for our two selves and an old maid-servant to look after him, when I am out, which will be necessary, £170 (or £180 rather) a-year, out of which we can spare £50 or £60 at least for Mary, while she stays at Islington, where she must and shall stay during her father's life, for his and her comfort. I know John will make speeches about it, but she shall not go into an hospital. The good lady of the madhouse, and her daughter, an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady, love her, and are taken with her amazingly; and I know from her own mouth she loves them, and longs to be with them as much. Poor thing, they say she was but the other morning saying she knew she must go to Bedlam for life; that one of her brothers would have it so, but the other would wish it

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

not, but be obliged to go with the stream ; that she had often as she passed Bedlam thought it likely, "here it may be my fate to end my days," conscious of a certain flightiness in her poor head oftentimes, and mindful of more than one severe illness of that nature before. A legacy of £100, which my father will have at Christmas, and this £20 I mentioned before, with what is in the house, will much more than set us clear. If my father, an old servant-maid, and I, can't live, and live comfortably, on £130 or £120 a-year, we ought to burn by slow fires ; and I almost would, that Mary might not go into an hospital. Let me not leave one unfavourable impression on your mind respecting my brother. Since this has happened, he has been very kind and brotherly ; but I fear for his mind : he has taken his ease in the world, and is not fit himself to struggle with difficulties, nor has much accustomed himself to throw himself into their way ; and I know his language is already, "Charles, you must take care of yourself ; you must not abridge yourself of a single pleasure you have been used to," etc. etc., and in that style of talking. But you, a Necessarian, can respect a difference of mind, and love what *is amiable* in a character not perfect. He has been very good ; but I fear for his mind. Thank God, I can unconnect myself with him, and shall manage all my father's moneys in future myself, if I take charge of

TO COLERIDGE

Daddy, which poor John has not even hinted a wish, at any future time even, to share with me. The lady at this madhouse assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary, retaining occasionally a composing draught or so for a while ; and there is a less expensive establishment in her house, where she will only not have a room and nurse to herself, for £50 or guineas a-year—the outside would be £60. You know, by economy, how much more even I shall be able to spare for her comforts. She will, I fancy, if she stays, make one of the family, rather than of the patients ; and the old and young ladies I like exceedingly, and she loves dearly ; and they, as the saying is, take to her very extraordinarily, if it is extraordinary that people who see my sister should love her. Of all the people I ever saw in the world, my poor sister was most and thoroughly devoid of the least tincture of selfishness. I will enlarge upon her qualities, poor dear, dearest soul, in a future letter, for my own comfort, for I understand her thoroughly ; and, if I mistake not, in the most trying situation that a human being can be found in, she will be found—(I speak not with sufficient humility, I fear), but humanly and foolishly speaking, she will be found, I trust, uniformly great and amiable. God keep her in her present mind !—to whom be thanks and praise for all His dispensations to mankind.

C. LAMB.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

These mentioned good fortunes and change of prospects had almost brought my mind over to the extreme, the very opposite to despair. I was in danger of making myself too happy. Your letter brought me back to a view of things which I had entertained from the beginning. I hope (for Mary I can answer)—but I hope that *I* shall through life never have less recollection nor a fainter impression of what has happened than I have now. 'Tis not a light thing, nor meant by the Almighty to be received lightly. I must be serious, circumspect, and deeply religious through life; and by such means may *both* of us escape madness in future, if it so please the Almighty.

Send me word how it fares with Sara. I repeat it, your letter was, and will be, an inestimable treasure to me. You have a view of what my situation demands of me, like my own view, and I trust a just one.

Coleridge, continue to write; but do not for ever offend me by talking of sending me cash. Sincerely, and on my soul, we do not want it. God love you both!

I will write again very soon. Do you write directly.

LETTER X.]

October 17, 1796.

My dearest Friend—I grieve from my very soul to observe you, in your plans of life, veering

TO COLERIDGE

about from this hope to the other, and settling nowhere. Is it an untoward fatality (speaking humanly) that does this for you—a stubborn, irresistible concurrence of events? or lies the fault, as I fear it does, in your own mind? You seem to be taking up splendid schemes of fortune only to lay them down again; and your fortunes are an *ignis fatuus* that has been conducting you, in thought, from Lancaster Court, Strand, to somewhere near Matlock; then jumping across to Dr. Somebody's, whose son's tutor you were likely to be; and would to God the dancing demon *may* conduct you at last, in peace and comfort, to the "life and labours of a cottager." You see, from the above awkward playfulness of fancy, that my spirits are not quite depressed. I should ill deserve God's blessings, which, since the late terrible event, have come down in mercy upon us, if I indulged regret or querulousness. Mary continues serene and cheerful. I have not by me a little letter she wrote to me; for, though I see her almost every day, yet we delight to write to one another, for we can scarce see each other but in company with some of the people of the house.

I have not the letter by me, but will quote from memory what she wrote in it: "I have no bad terrifying dreams. At midnight, when I happen to awake, the nurse sleeping by the side of me, with the noise of the poor mad people around me, I have no fear. The spirit of my

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mother seems to descend and smile upon me, and bid me live to enjoy the life and reason which the Almighty has given me. I shall see her again in heaven : she will then understand me better. My grandmother, too, will understand me better, and will then say no more, as she used to do, ‘ Polly, what are those poor crazy moythered brains of yours thinking of always ? ’ ” Poor Mary ! my mother indeed *never understood* her right. She loved her, as she loved us all, with a mother’s love ; but in opinion, in feeling, and sentiment, and disposition, bore so distant a resemblance to her daughter, that she never understood her right ; never could believe how much *she* loved her ; but met her caresses, her protestations of filial affection, too frequently with coldness and repulse. Still she was a good mother. God forbid I should think of her but *most* respectfully, *most* affectionately. Yet she would always love my brother above Mary, who was not worthy of one-tenth of that affection which Mary had a right to claim. But it is my sister’s gratifying recollection that every act of duty and of love she could pay, every kindness (and I speak true, when I say to the hurting of her health, and, most probably, in great part to the derangement of her senses), through a long course of infirmities and sickness, she could show her, she ever did. I will, some day, as I promised, enlarge to you upon my sister’s excellences : ’twill seem like exaggeration ; but

TO COLERIDGE

I will do it. At present, short letters suit my state of mind best. So take my kindest wishes for your comfort and establishment in life, and for Sara's welfare and comforts with you. God love you ! God love us all ! C. LAMB.

LETTER XI.]

October 24, 1796.

Coleridge, I feel myself much your debtor for that spirit of confidence and friendship which dictated your last letter. May your soul find peace at last in your cottage life ! I only wish you were but settled. Do continue to write to me. I read your letters with my sister, and they give us both abundance of delight. Especially they please us when you talk in a religious strain : not but we are offended occasionally with a certain freedom of expression, a certain air of mysticism, more consonant to the conceits of pagan philosophy than consistent with the humility of genuine piety. To instance now, in your last letter you say, "It is by the press that God hath given finite spirits, both evil and good (I suppose you mean *simply* bad men and good men), a portion as it were of His Omnipresence !" Now, high as the human intellect comparatively will soar, and wide as its influence, malign or salutary, can extend, is there not, Coleridge, a distance between the Divine Mind and it, which makes such language blasphemy ? Again, in your first

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fine consolatory epistle, you say, "you are a temporary sharer in human misery, that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine Nature." What more than this do those men say who are for exalting the man Christ Jesus into the second person of an unknown Trinity?—men whom you or I scruple not to call idolaters. Man, full of imperfections at best, and subject to wants which momentarily remind him of dependence ; man, a weak and ignorant being, "servile" from his birth "to all the skiey influences," with eyes sometimes open to discern the right path, but a head generally too dizzy to pursue it ; man, in the pride of speculation, forgetting his nature, and hailing in himself the future God, must make the angels laugh. Be not angry with me Coleridge : I wish not to cavil ; I know I cannot instruct you ; I only wish to remind you of that humility which best becometh the Christian character. God, in the New Testament (*our best guide*), is represented to us in the kind, condescending, amiable, familiar light of a *parent* ; and in my poor mind 'tis best for us so to consider of him, as our *heavenly* father, and our *best friend*, without indulging too bold conceptions of his nature. Let us learn to think humbly of ourselves, and rejoice in the appellation of "dear children," "brethren," and "co-heirs with Christ of the promises," seeking to know no further.

I am not insensible, indeed I am not, of the value of that first letter of yours, and I shall find

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reason to thank you for it again and again, long after that blemish in it is forgotten. It will be a fine lesson of comfort to us, whenever we read it ; and read it we often shall, Mary and I.

Accept our loves and best kind wishes for the welfare of yourself and wife and little one. Nor let me forget to wish you joy on your birthday, so lately past ; I thought you had been older. My kind thanks and remembrances to Lloyd.

God love us all !—and may He continue to be the father and the friend of the whole human race !

C. LAMB.

Sunday Evening.

LETTER XII.]

October 28, 1796.

My dear Friend—I am not ignorant that to be “a partaker of the Divine Nature” is a phrase to be met with in Scripture : I am only apprehensive, lest we in these latter days, tinctured (some of us perhaps pretty deeply) with mystical notions and the pride of metaphysics, might be apt to affix to such phrases a meaning, which the primitive users of them, the simple fishermen of Galilee for instance, never intended to convey. With that other part of your apology I am not quite so well satisfied. You seem to me to have been straining your comparing faculties to bring together things infinitely distant and unlike,—the feeble narrow-sphered operations of the human intellect and the everywhere diffused

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mind of Deity, the peerless wisdom of Jehovah. Even the expression appears to me inaccurate—"portion of Omnipresence." Omnipresence is an attribute the very essence of which is unlimitedness. How can Omnipresence be affirmed of anything in part? But enough of this spirit of disputatiousness. Let us attend to the proper business of human life, and talk a little together respecting our domestic concerns. Do you continue to make me acquainted with what you are doing, and how soon you are likely to be settled, once for all.

I have satisfaction in being able to bid you rejoice with me in my sister's continued reason, and composedness of mind. Let us both be thankful for it. I continue to visit her very frequently, and the people of the house are vastly indulgent to her. She is likely to be as comfortably situated in all respects as those who pay twice or thrice the sum. They love her, and she loves them, and makes herself very useful to them. Benevolence sets out on her journey with a good heart, and puts a good face on it, but is apt to limp and grow feeble, unless she calls in the aid of self-interest, by way of crutch. In Mary's case, as far as respects those she is with, 'tis well that these principles are so likely to co-operate. I am rather at a loss sometimes for books for her: our reading is somewhat confined, and we have nearly exhausted our London library. She has her hands too full of work to read much; but a

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little she must read, for reading was her daily bread.

Have you seen Bowles's new poem on "Hope"? What character does it bear? Has he exhausted his stores of tender plaintiveness? or is he the same in this last as in all his former pieces? The duties of the day call me off from this pleasant intercourse with my friend: so for the present adieu.

Now for the truant borrowing of a few minutes from business. Have you met with a new poem called the *Pursuits of Literature*? From the extracts in the *British Review* I judge it to be a very humorous thing. In particular, I remember what I thought a very happy character of Dr. Darwin's poetry. Among all your quaint readings did you ever light upon Walton's *Complete Angler*? I asked you the question once before: it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart. There are many choice old verses interspersed in it. It would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it; it would Christianise every discordant angry passion. Pray make yourself acquainted with it. Have you made it up with Southey yet? Surely one of you two must have been a very silly fellow, and the other not much better, to fall out like boarding-school misses. Kiss, shake hands, and make it up.

When will he be delivered of his new epic? *Madoc*, I think, is to be the name of it; though

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that is a name not familiar to my ears. What progress do you make in your hymns? What Review are you connected with? If with any, why do you delay to notice White's book? You are justly offended at its profaneness; but surely you have undervalued its *wit*, or you would have been more loud in its praises. Do not you think that in *Slender's* death and madness there is most exquisite humour, mingled with tenderness, that is irresistible, truly Shakspearian? Be more full in your mention of it. Poor fellow, he has (very undeservedly) lost by it; nor do I see that it is likely ever to reimburse him the charge of printing, etc. Give it a lift, if you can. I suppose you know that Allen's wife is dead, and he, just situated as he was, never the better, as the worldly people say, for her death, her money with her children being taken off his hands. I am just now wondering whether you will ever come to town again, Coleridge; 'tis among the things I dare not hope, but can't help wishing. For myself, I can live in the midst of town luxury and superfluity, and not long for them, and I can't see why your children might not hereafter do the same. Remember, you are not in Arcadia when you are in the west of England, and they may catch infection from the world without visiting the metropolis. But you seem to have set your heart upon this same cottage plan: and God prosper you in the experiment! I am at a loss for more to write

TO COLERIDGE

about ; so 'tis as well that I am arrived at the bottom of my paper.

God love you, Coleridge !—Our best loves and tenderest wishes await on you, your Sara, and your little one.

C. L.

LETTER XIII.]

November 8, 1796.

My brother, my friend—I am distress'd for you, believe me I am ; not so much for your painful, troublesome complaint, which, I trust, is only for a time, as for those anxieties which brought it on, and perhaps even now may be nursing its malignity. Tell me, dearest of my friends, is your mind at peace ? or has anything, yet unknown to me, happened to give you fresh disquiet, and steal from you all the pleasant dreams of future rest ? Are you still (I fear you are) far from being comfortably settled ? Would to God it were in my power to contribute towards the bringing of you into the haven where you would be ! But you are too well skilled in the philosophy of consolation to need my humble tribute of advice. In pain, and in sickness, and in all manner of disappointments, I trust you have that within you which shall speak peace to your mind. Make it, I entreat you, one of your puny comforts, that I feel for you, and share all your griefs with you. I feel as if I were troubling you about *little* things, now I am going to resume the subject of our last two letters ; but

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it may divert us both from unpleasanter feelings to make such matters, in a manner, of importance. Without further apology, then, it was not that I did not relish, that I did not in my heart thank you for those little pictures of your feelings which you lately sent me, if I neglected to mention them. You may remember you had said much the same things before to me on the same subject in a former letter, and I considered those last verses as only the identical thoughts better clothed ; either way (in prose or verse) such poetry must be welcome to me. I love them as I love the Confessions of Rousseau, and for the same reason : the same frankness, the same openness of heart, the same disclosure of all the most hidden and delicate affections of the mind. They make me proud to be thus esteemed worthy of the place of friend-confessor, brother-confessor, to a man like Coleridge. This last is, I acknowledge, language too high for friendship ; but it is also, I declare, too sincere for flattery. Now, to put on stilts, and talk magnificently about trifles, — I condescend, then, to your counsel, Coleridge, and allow my first Sonnet (sick to death am I to make mention of my Sonnets, and I blush to be so taken up with them, indeed I do) ; I allow it to run thus : *Fairy Land*, etc. etc., as I last wrote it.

The Fragments I now send you, I want printed to get rid of 'em ; for, while they stick

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burr-like to my memory, they tempt me to go on with the idle trade of versifying, which I long (most sincerely I speak it), I long to leave off, for it is unprofitable to my soul ; I feel it is ; and these questions about words, and debates about alterations, take me off, I am conscious, from the properer business of my life. Take my Sonnets, once for all ; and do not propose any reamendments, or mention them again in any shape to me, I charge you. I blush that my mind can consider them as things of any worth. And, pray, admit or reject these fragments as you like or dislike them, without ceremony. Call 'em Sketches, Fragments, or what you will ; but do not entitle any of my *things* Love Sonnets, as I told you to call 'em ; 'twill only make me look little in my own eyes ; for it is a passion of which I retain nothing. 'Twas a weakness, concerning which I may say, in the words of Petrarch (whose Life is now open before me), "if it drew me out of some vices, it also prevented the growth of many virtues, filling me with the love of the creature rather than the Creator, which is the death of the soul." Thank God, the folly has left me for ever. Not even a review of my love verses renews one wayward wish in me ; and if I am at all solicitous to trim 'em out in their best apparel, it is because they are to make their appearance in good company. Now to my fragments. Lest you have lost my "Grandame,"

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she shall be one. 'Tis among the few verses I ever wrote, that to Mary is another, which profit me in the recollection. God love her !—and may we two never love each other less !

These, Coleridge, are the few sketches I have thought worth preserving. How will they relish thus detached ? Will you reject all or any of them ? They are thine : do whatsoever thou listest with them. My eyes ache with writing long and late, and I wax wondrous sleepy. God bless you and yours, me and mine ! Good-night.

C. LAMB.

I will keep my eyes open reluctantly a minute longer to tell you that I love you for those simple, tender, heart-flowing lines with which you conclude your last, and in my eyes best, "Sonnet" (so you call 'em)—

"So, for the mother's sake, the child was dear ;
And dearer was the mother for the child."

Cultivate simplicity, Coleridge ; or rather, I should say, banish elaborateness ; for simplicity springs spontaneous from the heart, and carries into daylight its own modest buds, and genuine, sweet, and clear flowers of expression. I allow no hot-beds in the gardens of Parnassus. I am unwilling to go to bed and leave my sheet unfilled (a good piece of night-work for an idle body like me), so will finish with begging you to send me the earliest account of your complaint,

TO COLERIDGE

its progress, or (as I hope to God you will be able to send me) the tale of your recovery, or at least amendment. My tenderest remembrances to your Sara——

Once more, Good-night.

LETTER XIV.]

November 14, 1796.

Coleridge, I love you for dedicating your poetry to Bowles. Genius of the sacred fountain of tears, it was he who led you gently by the hand through all this valley of weeping; showed you the dark green yew trees, and the willow shades, where, by the fall of waters, you might indulge an uncomplaining melancholy, a delicious regret for the past, or weave fine visions of that awful future,

“When all the vanities of life’s brief day
Oblivion’s hurrying hand hath swept away,
And all its sorrows, at the awful blast
Of the archangel’s trump, are but as shadows past.”

I have another sort of dedication in my head for my few things, which I want to know if you approve of, and can insert. I mean to inscribe them to my sister. It will be unexpected, and it will give her pleasure; or do you think it will look whimsical at all? As I have not spoke to her about it I can easily reject the idea. But there is a monotony in the affections, which people living together, or, as we do now, very frequently seeing each other, are apt to give in

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

to ; a sort of indifference in the expression of kindness for each other, which demands that we should sometimes call to our aid the trickery of surprise. Do you publish with Lloyd, or without him? In either case my little portion may come last ; and after the fashion of orders to a country correspondent, I will give directions how I should like to have 'em done. The title-page to stand thus :—

POEMS

BY

CHARLES LAMB, OF THE INDIA HOUSE

Under this title the following motto, which, for want of room, I put over leaf, and desire you to insert, whether you like it or no. May not a gentleman choose what arms, mottoes, or armorial bearings the Herald will give him leave, without consulting his republican friend, who might advise none? May not a publican put up the sign of the *Saracen's Head*, even though his undiscerning neighbour should prefer, as more genteel, the *Cat and Gridiron*?

[Motto]

“This beauty, in the blossom of my youth,
When my first fire knew no adulterate incense,
Nor I no way to flatter but my fondness,
In the best language my true tongue could tell me,
And all the broken sighs my sick heart lend me,
I sued and served. Long did I love this lady.”

MASSINGER.

TO COLERIDGE

THE DEDICATION

THE FEW FOLLOWING POEMS,
CREATURES OF THE FANCY AND THE FEELING
IN LIFE'S MORE VACANT HOURS,
PRODUCED, FOR THE MOST PART, BY
LOVE IN IDLENESS,
ARE,
WITH ALL A BROTHER'S FONDNESS,
INSCRIBED TO
MARY ANNE LAMB,
THE AUTHOR'S BEST FRIEND AND SISTER

This is the pomp and paraphernalia of parting, with which I take my leave of a passion which has reigned so royally (so long) within me ; thus, with its trappings of laureateship, I fling it off, pleased and satisfied with myself that the weakness troubles me no longer. I am wedded, Coleridge, to the fortunes of my sister and my poor old father. Oh, my friend ! I think sometimes, could I recall the days that are past, which among them should I choose ? not those "merrier days," not the "pleasant days of hope," not "those wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid," which I have so often and so feelingly regretted, but the days, Coleridge, of a *mother's* fondness for her *school-boy*. What would I give to call her back to earth for *one* day !—on my knees to ask her pardon for all those little asperities of temper which, from time to time, have given

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

her gentle spirit pain !—and the day, my friend, I trust will come. There will be “time enough” for kind offices of love, if “Heaven’s eternal year” be ours. Hereafter, her meek spirit shall not reproach me. Oh, my friend, cultivate the filial feelings ! and let no man think himself released from the kind “charities” of relationship : these shall give him peace at the last ; these are the best foundation for every species of benevolence. I rejoice to hear, by certain channels, that you, my friend, are reconciled with all your relations. ’Tis the most kindly and natural species of love, and we have all the associated train of early feelings to secure its strength and perpetuity. Send me an account of your health : *indeed* I am solicitous about you. God love you and yours, C. LAMB.

LETTER XV.]

December 2, 1796.

I have delayed writing thus long, not having by me my copy of your poems, which I had lent. I am not satisfied with all your intended omissions. Why omit 40, 63, 84 ? Above all, let me protest strongly against your rejecting the “Complaint of Ninathoma,” 86. The words, I acknowledge, are Ossian’s, but you have added to them the “music of Caril.” If a vicarious substitute be wanting, sacrifice (and ’twill be a piece of self-denial too) the “Epitaph on an Infant,” of which its author seems so proud, so

TO COLERIDGE

tenacious. Or, if your heart be set on *perpetuating* the four-line wonder, I'll tell you what to do ; sell the copyright of it at once to a country statuary. Commence in this manner Death's prime poet-laureate ; and let your verses be adopted in every village round, instead of those hitherto famous ones :—

“Afflictions sore long time I bore ;
Physicians were in vain.”

I have seen your last very beautiful poem in the *Monthly Magazine* : write thus, and you most generally have written thus, and I shall never quarrel with you about simplicity. With regard to my lines—

“Laugh all that weep,” etc.,

I would willingly sacrifice them ; but my portion of the volume is so ridiculously little, that, in honest truth, I can't spare 'em. As things are, I have very slight pretensions to participate in the title-page. White's book is at length reviewed in the *Monthly* ; was it your doing, or Dyer's, to whom I sent him ?—or, rather, do you not write in the *Critical* ?—for I observed, in an article of this month's, a line quoted out of that Sonnet on Mrs. Siddons,

“With eager wondering, and perturb'd delight.”

And a line from *that* Sonnet would not readily have occurred to a stranger. That sonnet,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Coleridge, brings afresh to my mind the time when you wrote those on Bowles, Priestley, Burke ; —'twas two Christmases ago, and in that nice little smoky room at the *Salutation*, which is even now continually presenting itself to my recollection, with all its associated train of pipes, tobacco, egg-hot, welsh-rabbit, metaphysics, and poetry. —Are we *never* to meet again ? How differently I am circumstanced now ! I have never met with anyone—never shall meet with anyone—who could or can compensate me for the loss of your society. I have no one to talk all these matters about to ; I lack friends. I lack books to supply their absence ; but these complaints ill become me. Let me compare my present situation, prospects, and state of mind, with what they were but two months back—but two months ! O my friend, I am in danger of forgetting the awful lessons then presented to me ! Remind me of them ; remind me of my duty ! Talk seriously with me when you do write ! I thank you, from my heart I thank you, for your solicitude about my sister. She is quite well, but must not, I fear, come to live with us yet a good while. In the first place, because, at present, it would hurt her, and hurt my father, for them to be together ; secondly, from a regard to the world's good report ; for, I fear, tongues will be busy whenever that event takes place. Some have hinted, one man has pressed it on me, that she should be in perpetual confinement : what

TO COLERIDGE

she hath done to deserve, or the necessity of such an hardship, I see not ; do you ? I am starving at the India House,—near seven o'clock without my dinner ; and so it has been, and will be, almost all the week. I get home at night o'er-wearied, quite faint, and then to cards with my father, who will not let me enjoy a meal in peace ; but I must conform to my situation ; and I hope I am, for the most part, not unthankful.

I am got home at last, and, after repeated games at cribbage, have got my father's leave to write awhile ; with difficulty got it, for when I expostulated about playing any more, he very aptly replied, "If you won't play with me, you might as well not come home at all." The argument was unanswerable, and I set to afresh. I told you I do not approve of your omissions ; neither do I quite coincide with you in your arrangements. I have not time to point out a better, and I suppose some self-associations of your own have determined their place as they now stand. Your beginning, indeed, with the *Joan of Arc* lines, I coincide entirely with. I love a splendid outset—a magnificent portico ; and the diapason is grand. When I read the *Religious Musings*, I think how poor, how un-elevated, unoriginal, my blank verse is—"Laugh all that weep," especially, where the subject demanded a grandeur of conception ; and I ask what business they have among yours ? but

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

friendship covereth a multitude of defects. I want some loppings made in the "Chatterton": it wants but a little to make it rank among the finest irregular lyrics I ever read. Have you time and inclination to go to work upon it?—or is it too late?—or do you think it needs none? Don't reject those verses in your *Watchman*, "Dear native brook," etc.; nor I think those last lines you sent me, in which "all effortless" is without doubt to be preferred to "inactive." If I am writing more than ordinarily dully, 'tis that I am stupefied with a tooth-ache. Hang it! do not omit 48, 52, and 53: what you do retain, though, call Sonnets, for heaven's sake, and not Effusions. Spite of your ingenious anticipation of ridicule in your Preface, the last five lines of 50 are too good to be lost; the rest are not much worth. My tooth becomes importunate: I must finish. Pray, pray, write to me: if you knew with what an anxiety of joy I open such a long packet as you last sent me, you would not grudge giving a few minutes now and then to this intercourse (the only intercourse I fear we two shall ever have)—this conversation with your friend: such I boast to be called. God love you and yours! Write to me when you move, lest I should direct wrong. Has Sara no poems to publish? Those lines, 129, are probably too light for the volume where the *Religious Musings* are; but I remember some very beautiful lines, addressed by somebody at

TO COLERIDGE

Bristol to somebody in London. God bless you
once more.

C. LAMB.

Thursday Night.

LETTER XVII.] [Fragment.] *December 5, 1796.*

At length I have done with verse-making ; not that I relish other people's poetry less : theirs comes from 'em without effort ; mine is the difficult operation of a brain scanty of ideas, made more difficult by disuse. I have been reading "The Task" with fresh delight. I am glad you love Cowper. I could forgive a man for not enjoying Milton ; but I would not call that man my friend who should be offended with the "divine chit-chat of Cowper." Write to me. God love you and yours !

C. L.

LETTER XVII.]

December 10, 1796.

I had put my letter into the post rather hastily, not expecting to have to acknowledge another from you so soon. This morning's present has made me alive again. My last night's epistle was childishly querulous : but you have put a little life into me, and I will thank you for your remembrance of me, while my sense of it is yet warm ; for if I linger a day or two I may use the same phrase of acknowledgment, or similar, but the feeling that dictates it now will be gone. I shall send you a *caput*

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

mortuum, not a *cor vivens*. Thy *Watchman's*, thy bellman's verses, I do retort upon thee, thou libellous varlet! Why, you cried the hours yourself, and who made you so proud! But I submit, to show my humility most implicitly to your dogmas. I reject entirely the copy of verses you reject. With regard to my leaving off versifying, you have said so many pretty things, so many fine compliments, ingeniously decked out in the garb of sincerity, and undoubtedly springing from a present feeling somewhat like sincerity, that you might melt the most un-muse-ical soul—did you not (now for a Rowland compliment for your profusion of Olivers!) did you not in your very epistle, by the many pretty fancies and profusion of heart displayed in it, dissuade and discourage me from attempting anything after you? At present I have not leisure to make verses, nor anything approaching to a fondness for the exercise. In the ignorant present time, who can answer for the future man? “At lovers’ perjuries Jove laughs”; and poets have sometimes a disingenuous way of forswearing their occupation. This though is not my case. The tender cast of soul, sombred with melancholy and subsiding recollections, is favourable to the Sonnet or the Elegy; but from

“The sainted growing woof
The teasing troubles keep aloof.”

TO COLERIDGE

The music of poesy may charm for a while the importunate teasing cares of life ; but the teased and troubled man is not in a disposition to make that music.

You sent me some very sweet lines relative to Burns, but it was at a time when in my highly agitated and perhaps somewhat distorted state of mind I thought it a duty to read 'em hastily and burn 'em. I burned all my own verses ; all my book of extracts from Beaumont and Fletcher and a thousand sources ; I burned a little journal of my foolish passion which I had a long time kept—

“Noting ere they past away
The little lines of yesterday.”

I almost burned all your letters,—I did as bad, I lent 'em to a friend to keep out of my brother's sight, should he come and make inquisition into our papers ; for, much as he dwelt upon your conversation while you were among us, and delighted to be with you, it has been his fashion ever since to depreciate and cry you down : you were the cause of my madness—you and your “damned foolish sensibility and melancholy” ; and he lamented, with a true brotherly feeling, that we ever met ; even as the sober citizen, when his son went astray upon the mountains of Parnassus, is said to have “cursed Wit and Poetry and Pope.” I quote wrong, but no matter. These letters I lent to a friend to be

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

out of the way for a season ; but I have claimed 'em in vain, and shall not cease to regret their loss. Your packets, posterior to the date of my misfortunes, commencing with that valuable consolatory epistle, are every day accumulating : they are sacred things with me.

Publish your Burns when and how you like, it will be new to me : my memory of it is very confused, and tainted with unpleasant associations. Burns was the god of my idolatry, as Bowles is of yours. I am jealous of your fraternising with Bowles, when I think you relish him more than Burns, or my old favourite, Cowper. But you conciliate matters when you talk of the "divine chit-chat" of the latter : by that expression I see you thoroughly relish him. I love Mrs. Coleridge for her excuses an hundredfold more dearly than if she heaped "line upon line," out-Hannah-ing Hannah More ; and would rather hear you sing "Did a very little baby," by your family fireside, than listen to you when you were repeating one of Bowles's sweetest sonnets, in your sweet manner, while we two were indulging sympathy, a solitary luxury, by the fireside at the *Salutation*. Yet have I no higher ideas of heaven. Your company was one "cordial in this melancholy vale" : the remembrance of it is a blessing partly, and partly a curse. When I can abstract myself from things present, I can enjoy it with a freshness of relish ; but it more constantly operates to an unfavourable

TO COLERIDGE

comparison with the uninteresting converse I always and *only* can partake in. Not a soul loves Bowles here ; scarce one has heard of Burns ; few but laugh at me for reading my Testament. They talk a language I understand not. I conceal sentiments that would be a puzzle to them. I can only converse with you by letter, and with the dead in their books. My sister, indeed, is all I can wish in a companion ; but our spirits are alike poorly, our reading and knowledge from the self-same sources ; our communication with the scenes of the world alike narrow. Never having kept separate company, or any “company” “*together*”—never having read separate books, and few books *together*—what knowledge have we to convey to each other ? In our little range of duties and connections, how few sentiments can take place, without friends, with few books, with a taste for religion, rather than a strong religious habit ! We need some support, some leading-strings to cheer and direct us. You talk very wisely ; and be not sparing of *your advice*. Continue to remember us, and to show us you do remember us : we will take as lively an interest in what concerns you and yours. All I can add to your happiness will be sympathy : you can add to mine *more* ; you can teach me wisdom. I am indeed an unreasonable correspondent ; but I was unwilling to let my last night’s letter go off without this qualifier : you will perceive by this

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

my mind is easier, and you will rejoice. I do not expect or wish you to write till you are moved ; and, of course, shall not, till you announce to me that event, think of writing myself. Love to Mrs. Coleridge and David Hartley, and my kind remembrance to Lloyd, if he is with you.

C. LAMB.

I will get *Nature and Art* : have not seen it yet, nor any of Jeremy Taylor's works.

LETTER XVIII.]

December 10, 1796.

I am sorry I cannot now relish your poetical present so thoroughly as I feel it deserves ; but I do not the less thank Lloyd and you for it.

In truth, Coleridge, I am perplexed, and at times almost cast down. I am beset with perplexities. The old hag of a wealthy relation who took my aunt off our hands in the beginning of trouble, has found out that she is "indolent and mulish"—I quote her own words, and that her attachment to us is so strong that she can never be happy apart. The lady, with delicate irony, remarks, that if I am not an hypocrite I shall rejoice to receive her again ; and that it will be a means of making me more fond of home to have so dear a friend to come home to ! The fact is, she is jealous of my aunt's bestowing any kind recollections on us while she enjoys the patronage of her roof. She says she finds it

TO COLERIDGE

inconsistent with her own "ease and tranquillity," to keep her any longer ; and, in fine, summons me to fetch her home. Now, much as I should rejoice to transplant the poor old creature from the chilling air of such patronage, yet I know how straitened we are already, how unable already to answer any demand which sickness or any extraordinary expense may make. I know this ; and all unused as I am to struggle with perplexities, I am somewhat nonplussed, to say no worse. This prevents me from a thorough relish of what Lloyd's kindness and yours have furnished me with. I thank you though from my heart, and feel myself not quite alone in the earth.

Before I offer, what alone I have to offer, a few obvious remarks on the poems you sent me, I can but notice the odd coincidence of two young men, in one age, carolling their grandmothers. Love, what L. calls the "feverish and romantic tie," hath too long domineered over all the charities of home : the dear domestic ties of father, brother, husband. The amiable and benevolent Cowper has a beautiful passage in his "Task,"—some natural and painful reflections on his deceased parents : and Hayley's sweet lines to his mother are notoriously the best things he ever wrote. Cowper's lines, some of them are—

"How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire ! a Mother, too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death."

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

I cannot but smile to see my granny so gaily decked forth : though, I think, whoever altered “thy” praises to “her” praises—“thy” honoured memory to “her” honoured memory, did wrong ; they best expressed my feelings. There is a pensive state of recollection in which the mind is disposed to apostrophise the departed objects of its attachment ; and, breaking loose from grammatical precision, changes from the first to the third, and from the third to the first person, just as the random fancy or the feeling directs. Among Lloyd’s sonnets, the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 11th are eminently beautiful. I think him too lavish of his expletives: the *do’s* and *did’s*, when they occur too often, bring a quaintness with them along with their simplicity, or rather air of antiquity, which the patrons of them seem desirous of conveying.

Another time, I may notice more particularly Lloyd’s, Southey’s, Dermody’s Sonnets. I shrink from them now: my teasing lot makes me too confused for a clear judgment of things, too selfish for sympathy ; and these ill-digested, meaningless remarks, I have imposed on myself as a task, to lull reflection, as well as to show you I did not neglect reading your valuable present. Return my acknowledgments to Lloyd ; you two seem to be about realising an Elysium upon earth, and, no doubt, I shall be happier. Take my best wishes. Remember me most affectionately to Mrs. C——, and give little David

TO COLERIDGE

Hartley (God bless its little heart !) a kiss for me. Bring him up to know the meaning of his Christian name, and what that name (imposed upon him) will demand of him.

God love you !

C. LAMB.

I write, for one thing, to say that I shall write no more till you send me word where you are, for you are so soon to move.

My sister is pretty well, thank God. We think of you very often. God bless you : continue to be my correspondent, and I will strive to fancy that this world is *not* "all barrenness."

LETTER XIX.]

January 2, 1797.

If the fraternal sentiment conveyed in the following lines will atone for the total want of anything like merit or genius in it, I desire you will print it next after my other Sonnet to my Sister.

Friend of my earliest years and childish days,
My joys, my sorrows, thou with me hast shared,
Companion dear ; etc.

This has been a sad long letter of business, with no room in it for what honest Bunyan terms heart-work. I have just room left to congratulate you on your removal to Stowey ; to wish success to all your projects ; to "bid fair peace" be to

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that house ; to send my love and best wishes, breathed warmly, after your dear Sara, and her little David Hartley. If Lloyd be with you, bid him write to me : I feel to whom I am obliged primarily for two very friendly letters I have received already from him. A dainty sweet book that *Nature and Art* is. I am at present re-re-reading Priestley's Examination of the Scotch Doctors : how the rogue strings 'em up ! three together ! You have no doubt read that clear, strong, humorous, most entertaining piece of reasoning. If not, procure it, and be exquisitely amused. I wish I could get more of Priestley's works. Can you recommend me to any more books, easy of access, such as circulating shops afford ? God bless you and yours.

Monday Morning, at Office.

Poor Mary is very unwell with a sore throat and a slight species of scarlet fever. God bless her too.

LETTER XX.]

January 5, 1797.

Sunday Morning.—You cannot surely mean to degrade the Joan of Arc into a pot-girl. You are not going, I hope, to annex to that most splendid ornament of Southey's poem all this cock-and-a-bull story of Joan, the publican's daughter of Neufchatel, with the lamentable

TO COLERIDGE

episode of a waggoner, his wife, and six children. The texture will be most lamentably disproportionate. The first forty or fifty lines of these addenda are, no doubt, in their way, admirable, too ; but many would prefer the Joan of Southey.

“ On mightiest deeds to brood
Of shadowy vastness, such as made my heart
Throb fast ; anon I paused, and in a state
Of half expectance listen'd to the wind ; ”

“ They wonder'd at me, who had known me once
A cheerful careless damsel ; ”

“ The eye,
That of the circling throng and of the visible world
Unseeing, saw the shapes of holy phantasy ; ”

I see nothing in your description of the Maid equal to these. There is a fine originality certainly in those lines—

“ For she had lived in this bad world
As in a place of tombs,
And touch'd not the pollutions of the dead ; ”

but your “ fierce vivacity ” is a faint copy of the “ fierce and terrible benevolence ” of Southey ; added to this, that it will look like rivalry in you, and extort a comparison with Southey,—I think to your disadvantage. And the lines, considered in themselves as an addition to what you had before written (strains of a far higher mood), are but such as Madame Fancy loves in some of her more familiar moods, at such times as she has met Noll Goldsmith, and walked and talked with him, calling him “ old acquaintance.”

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Southey certainly has no pretensions to vie with you in the sublime of poetry ; but he tells a plain tale better than you. I will enumerate some woful blemishes, some of 'em sad deviations from that simplicity which was your aim. "Hail'd who might be near" (the "canvas-coverture moving," by the by, is laughable) ; "a woman and six children" (by the way,—why not nine children ? It would have been just half as pathetic again) : "statues of sleep they seem'd" : "frost-mangled wretch" : "green putridity" : "hail'd him immortal" (rather ludicrous again) : "voic'd a sad and simple tale" (abominable !) : "unprovender'd" : "such his tale" : "Ah ! suffering to the height of what was suffer'd" (a most *insufferable line*) : "amazements of affright" : "the hot sore brain attributes its own hues of ghastliness and torture" (what shocking confusion of ideas !).

In these delineations of common and natural feelings, in the familiar walks of poetry, you seem to resemble Montauban dancing with Roubigné's tenants, "*much of his native loftiness remained in the execution.*"

I was reading your *Religious Musings* the other day, and sincerely I think it the noblest poem in the language, next after the *Paradise Lost* ; and even that was not made the vehicle of such grand truths. "There is one mind," etc., down to "Almighty's throne," are without a rival in the whole compass of my poetical reading.

TO COLERIDGE

"Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
Views all creation."

I wish I could have written those lines. I rejoice that I am able to relish them. The loftier walks of Pindus are your proper region. There you have no compeer in modern times. Leave the lowlands, unenvied, in possession of such men as Cowper and Southey. Thus am I pouring balsam into the wounds I may have been inflicting on my poor friend's vanity.

In your notice of Southey's new volume you omit to mention the most pleasing of all, the "Miniature"—

"There were
Who form'd high hopes and flattering ones of thee
Young Robert,
Spirit of Spenser!—was the wanderer wrong?"

Fairfax I have been in quest of a long time. Johnson, in his "Life of Waller," gives a most delicious specimen of him, and adds, in the true manner of that delicate critic, as well as amiable man, "It may be presumed that this old version will not be much read after the elegant translation of my friend, Mr. Hoole." I endeavoured—I wished to gain some idea of Tasso from this Mr. Hoole, the great boast and ornament of the India House, but soon desisted. I found him more vapid than smallest small beer "sun-vinegared." Your "Dream," down to that exquisite line—

"I can't tell half his adventures,"

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

is a most happy resemblance of Chaucer. The remainder is so so. The best line, I think, is, "He belong'd, I believe, to the witch Melancholy." By the way, when will our volume come out? Don't delay it till you have written a new Joan of Arc. Send what letters you please by me, and in any way you choose, single or double. The India Company is better adapted to answer the cost than the generality of my friend's correspondents,—such poor and honest dogs as John Thelwall, particularly. I cannot say I know Colson, at least intimately. I once supped with him and Allen: I think his manners very pleasing. I will not tell you what I think of Lloyd, for he may by chance come to see this letter, and that thought puts a restraint on me. I cannot think what subject would suit your epic genius; some philosophical subject, I conjecture, in which shall be blended the sublime of poetry and of science. Your proposed "Hymns" will be a fit preparatory study wherewith "to discipline your young noviciate soul." I grow dull; I'll go walk myself out of my dulness.

Sunday Night.—You and Sara are very good to think so kindly and so favourably of poor Mary; I would to God all did so too. But I very much fear she must not think of coming home in my father's lifetime. It is very hard upon her; but our circumstances are peculiar, and we must submit to them. God be praised she is so well

TO COLERIDGE

as she is. She bears her situation as one who has no right to complain. My poor old aunt, whom you have seen, the kindest, goodest creature to me when I was at school ; who used to toddle there to bring me good things, when I, school-boy like, only despised her for it, and used to be ashamed to see her come and sit herself down on the old coal-hole steps as you went into the old grammar-school, and open her apron, and bring out her bason, with some nice thing she had caused to be saved for me ; the good old creature is now lying on her death-bed. I cannot bear to think on her deplorable state. To the shock she received on that our evil day, from which she never completely recovered, I impute her illness. She says, poor thing, she is glad she is come home to die with me. I was always her favourite :

“ No after friendship e'er can raise
The endearments of our early days,
Nor e'er the heart such fondness prove,
As when it first began to love.”

Lloyd has kindly left me, for a keep-sake, *John Woolman*. You have read it, he says, and like it. Will you excuse one short extract ? I think it could not have escaped you :—“ Small treasure to a resigned mind is sufficient. How happy is it to be content with a little, to live in humility, and feel *that* in us, which breathes out this language—Abba ! Father ! ”——I am almost ashamed to patch up a letter in this miscellaneous

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

sort ; but I please myself in the thought, that anything from me will be acceptable to you. I am rather impatient, childishly so, to see our names affixed to the same common volume. Send me two, when it does come out ; two will be enough—or indeed one—but two better. I have a dim recollection that, when in town, you were talking of the Origin of Evil as a most prolific subject for a long poem. Why not adopt it, Coleridge ?—there would be room for imagination. Or the description (from a Vision or Dream, suppose) of an Utopia in one of the planets (the Moon, for instance). Or a Five Days' Dream, which shall illustrate, in sensible imagery, Hartley's five Motives to Conduct :—

1. Sensation ;
2. Imagination ;
3. Ambition ;
4. Sympathy ;
5. Theopathy :—

First. Banquets, music, etc., effeminacy,—and their insufficiency. *Second.* “Beds of hyacinth and roses, where young Adonis oft reposes” ; “Fortunate Isles” ; “The pagan Elysium,” etc. ; poetical pictures ; antiquity as pleasing to the fancy ;—their emptiness, madness, etc. *Third.* Warriors, Poets ; some famous yet more forgotten ; their fame or oblivion now alike indifferent ; pride, vanity, etc. *Fourth.* All manner of pitiable stories, in Spenser-like verse ; love ; friendship, relationship, etc. *Fifth.* Hermits ; Christ and his apostles ; martyrs ; heaven, etc. An imagination like yours, from these scanty hints, may expand into a thousand great ideas, if indeed

TO COLERIDGE

you at all comprehend my scheme, which scarce do myself.

Monday Morn.—"A London letter—Ninepence halfpenny!" Look you, master poet, I have remorse as well as another man, and my bowels can sound upon occasion. But I must put you to this charge, for I cannot keep back my protest, however ineffectual, against the annexing your latter lines to those former—this putting of new wine into old bottles. This my duty done, I will cease from writing till you invent some more reasonable mode of conveyance. Well may the "ragged followers of the Nine" set up for flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-'em-ists! and I do not wonder that in their splendid visions of Utopias in America they protest against the admission of those *yellow*-complexioned, *copper*-coloured, *white*-livered gentlemen, who never proved themselves their friends. Don't you think your verses on a "Young Ass" too trivial a companion for the "Religious Musings"?—"Scoundrel monarch," alter that; and the "Man of Ross" is scarce admissible, as it now stands, curtailed of its fairer half: reclaim its property from the "Chatterton," which it does but encumber, and it will be a rich little poem. I hope you expunge great part of the old notes in the new edition: that, in particular, most barefaced, unfounded, impudent assertion, that Mr. Rogers is indebted for his story to *Loch Lomond*, a poem by Bruce! I have read the

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

latter. I scarce think you have. Scarce anything is common to them both. The poor author of the *Pleasures of Memory* was sorely hurt, Dyer says, by the accusation of unoriginality. He never saw the poem. I long to read your poem on Burns ; I retain so indistinct a memory of it. In what shape and how does it come into public ? As you leave off writing poetry till you finish your Hymns, I suppose you print, now, all you have got by you. You have scarce enough unprinted to make a second volume with Lloyd. Tell me all about it. What is become of Cowper ? Lloyd told me of some verses on his mother. If you have them by you, pray send 'em me. I do so love him ! Never mind their merit. May be *I* may like 'em, as your taste and mine do not always exactly *identify*.
Yours, C. LAMB.

LETTER XXI.]

January 10, 1797.

I need not repeat my wishes to have my little sonnets printed *verbatim* my last way. In particular, I fear lest you should prefer printing my first sonnet, as you have done more than once, "Did the wand of Merlin wave ?" It looks so like *Mr.* Merlin, the ingenious successor of the immortal Merlin, now living in good health and spirits, and flourishing in magical reputation in Oxford Street ; and, on my life, one half who read it would understand it so.

TO COLERIDGE

Do put 'em forth, finally, as I have in various letters settled it ; for first a man's self is to be pleased, and then his friends ; and, of course, the greater number of his friends, if they differ *inter se*. Thus taste may safely be put to the vote. I do long to see our names together ; not for vanity's sake, and naughty pride of heart altogether, for not a living soul I know, or am intimate with, will scarce read the book : so I shall gain nothing, *quoad famam* ; and yet there is a little vanity mixes in it, I cannot help denying. I am aware of the unpoetical cast of the six last lines of my last sonnet, and think myself unwarranted in smuggling so tame a thing into the book ; only the sentiments of those six lines are thoroughly congenial to me in my state of mind, and I wish to accumulate perpetuating tokens of my affection to poor Mary. That it has no originality in its cast, nor anything in the feelings but what is common and natural to thousands, nor ought properly to be called poetry, I see ; still it will tend to keep present to my mind a view of things which I ought to indulge. These six lines, too, have not, to a reader, a connectedness with the foregoing.—Omit it, if you like.—What a treasure it is to my poor, indolent, and unemployed mind, thus to lay hold on a subject to talk about, though 'tis but a sonnet, and that of the lowest order ! How mournfully inactive I am !—'Tis night : Good-night.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

My sister, I thank God, is nigh recovered : she was seriously ill. Do, in your next letter, and that right soon, give me some satisfaction respecting your present situation at Stowey. Is it a farm you have got ? And what does your worship know about farming ?

Coleridge, I want you to write an epic poem. Nothing short of it can satisfy the vast capacity of true poetic genius. Having one great end to direct all your poetical faculties to, and on which to lay out your hopes, your ambition will show you to what you are equal. By the sacred energies of Milton ! by the dainty, sweet, and soothing phantasies of honey-tongued Spenser ! I adjure you to attempt the epic, or do something more ample than writing an occasional brief ode or sonnet ; something, “to make yourself for ever known,—to make the age to come your own.” But I prate ; doubtless you meditate something. When you are exalted among the lords of epic fame, I shall recall with pleasure, and exultingly, the days of your humility, when you disdained not to put forth, in the same volume with mine, your *Religious Musings* and that other poem from the *Joan of Arc*, those promising first-fruits of high renown to come. You have learning, you have fancy, you have enthusiasm, you have strength, and amplitude of wing enow for flights like those I recommend. In the vast and unexplored regions of fairy-land there is ground enough unfound and uncultivated :

TO COLERIDGE

search there, and realise your favourite Susquehannah scheme. In all our comparisons of taste, I do not know whether I have ever heard your opinion of a poet, very dear to me,—the now-out-of-fashion Cowley. Favour me with your judgment of him, and tell me if his prose essays, in particular, as well as no inconsiderable part of his verse, be not delicious. I prefer the graceful rambling of his essays, even to the courtly elegance and ease of Addison ; abstracting from this the latter's exquisite humour.

When the little volume is printed, send me three or four, at all events not more than six copies, and tell me if I put you to any additional expense, by printing with you. I have no thought of the kind, and in that case must reimburse you.

Priestley, whom I sin in almost adoring, speaks of "such a choice of company as tends to keep up that right bent and firmness of mind which a necessary intercourse with the world would otherwise warp and relax." "Such fellowship is the true balsam of life ; its cement is infinitely more durable than that of the friendships of the world ; and it looks for its proper fruit and complete gratification to the life beyond the grave." Is there a possible chance for such an one as I to realise in this world such friendships ? Where am I to look for 'em ? What testimonials shall I bring of my being worthy of such friendship ? Alas ! the great and good go together in

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

separate herds, and leave such as I to lag far, far behind in all intellectual, and, far more grievous to say, in all moral accomplishments. Coleridge, I have not one truly elevated character among my acquaintance: not one Christian: not one but undervalues Christianity. Singly, what am I to do? Wesley (have you read his life?) was *he* not an elevated character? Wesley has said, "Religion is not a solitary thing." Alas! it necessarily is so with me, or next to solitary. 'Tis true you write to me; but correspondence by letter, and personal intimacy, are very widely different. Do, do write to me, and do some good to my mind, already how much "warped and relaxed" by the world! 'Tis the conclusion of another evening. Good night. God have us all in his keeping!

If you are sufficiently at leisure, oblige me with an account of your plan of life at Stowey—your literary occupations and prospects; in short, make me acquainted with every circumstance which, as relating to you, can be interesting to me. Are you yet a Berkleyan? Make me one. I rejoice in being, speculatively, a Necessarian. Would to God, I were habitually a practical one! Confirm me in the faith of that great and glorious doctrine, and keep me steady in the contemplation of it. You some time since expressed an intention you had of finishing some extensive work on the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. Have you let that intention

TO COLERIDGE

go? Or are you doing anything towards it? Make to yourself other ten talents. My letter is full of nothingness. I talk of nothing. But I must talk. I love to write to you. I take a pride in it. It makes me think less meanly of myself. It makes me think myself not totally disconnected from the better part of mankind. I know I am too dissatisfied with the beings around me; but I cannot help occasionally exclaiming, "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Meshech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar!" I know I am noways better in practice than my neighbours, but I have a taste for religion, an occasional earnest aspiration after perfection, which they have not. I gain nothing by being with such as myself: we encourage one another in mediocrity. I am always longing to be with men more excellent than myself. All this must sound odd to you; but these are my predominant feelings when I sit down to write to you, and I should put force upon my mind were I to reject them. Yet I rejoice, and feel my privilege with gratitude, when I have been reading some wise book, such as I have just been reading, *Priestley on Philosophical Necessity*, in the thought that I enjoy a kind of communion, a kind of friendship even, with the great and good. Books are to me instead of friends. I wish they did not resemble the latter in their scarceness.

And how does little David Hartley? "*Ecquid*

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in antiquam virtutem?” Does his mighty name work wonders yet upon his little frame and opening mind? I did not distinctly understand you: you don’t mean to make an actual ploughman of him! Is Lloyd with you yet? Are you intimate with Southey? What poems is he about to publish? He hath a most prolific brain, and is indeed a most sweet poet. But how can you answer all the various mass of interrogation I have put to you in the course of this sheet? Write back just what you like, only write something, however brief. I have now nigh finished my page, and got to the end of another evening (Monday evening), and my eyes are heavy and sleepy, and my brain unsuggestive. I have just heart enough awake to say good-night once more, and God love you, my dear friend; God love us all! Mary bears an affectionate remembrance of you.

CHARLES LAMB.

LETTER XXII.]

January 16, 1797.

Dear C——,—You have learned by this time, with surprise, no doubt, that Lloyd is with me in town. The emotions I felt on his coming so unlooked for, are not ill expressed in what follows, and what (if you do not object to them as too personal, and to the world obscure, or otherwise wanting in worth) I should wish to make a part of our little volume. I shall be

TO COLERIDGE

sorry if that volume comes out, as it necessarily must do, unless you print those very school-boy-ish verses I sent you on not getting leave to come down to Bristol last Summer. I say I shall be sorry that I have addressed you in nothing which can appear in our joint volume ; so frequently, so habitually, as you dwell in my thoughts, 'tis some wonder those thoughts came never yet in contact with a poetical mood. But you dwell in my heart of hearts, and I love you in all the naked honesty of prose. God bless you, and all your little domestic circle ! My tenderest remembrances to your beloved Sara, and a smile and a kiss from me to your dear little David Hartley. The verses I refer to above, slightly amended, I have sent (forgetting to ask your leave, tho' indeed I gave them only your initials) to the *Monthly Magazine*, where they may possibly appear next month, and where I hope to recognise your poem on Burns.

TO CHARLES LLOYD, AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

Alone, obscure, without a friend,
A cheerless, solitary thing,
Why seeks my Lloyd the stranger out ?
What offering can the stranger bring

Of social scenes, home-bred delights,
That him in aught compensate may
For Stowey's pleasant winter nights,
For loves and friendships far away,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

In brief oblivion to forego
Friends, such as thine, so justly dear,
And be awhile with me content
To stay, a kindly loiterer, here ?

For this a gleam of random joy
Hath flush'd my unaccustomed cheek ;
And, with an o'er-charged bursting heart,
I feel the thanks I cannot speak.

O ! sweet are all the Muse's lays,
And sweet the charm of matin bird—
'Twas long, since these estranged ears
The sweeter voice of friend had heard.

The voice hath spoke : the pleasant sounds,
In memory's ear, in after time
Shall live, to sometimes rouse a tear,
And sometimes prompt an honest rhyme.

For when the transient charm is fled,
And when the little week is o'er,
To cheerless, friendless solitude
When I return, as heretofore—

Long, long, within my aching heart
The grateful sense shall cherished be ;
I'll think less meanly of myself,
That Lloyd will sometimes think on me.

O Coleridge, would to God you were in London with us, or we two at Stowey with you all ! Lloyd takes up his abode at the *Bull and Mouth* ; the *Cat and Salutation* would have had a charm more forcible for me. *O noctes cænæque Deûm !* Anglice—Welsh rabbit, punch, and poesy. Should you be induced to publish those very schoolboy-ish verses, print 'em as they will occur, if at all, in the *Monthly Magazine* ; yet I

TO COLERIDGE

should feel ashamed that to you I wrote nothing better : but they are too personal, and almost trifling and obscure withal. Some lines of mine to Cowper were in the last *Monthly Magazine* : they have not body of thought enough to plead for the retaining of 'em. My sister's kind love to you all.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXIII.]

February 13, 1797.

Your poem is altogether admirable : parts of it are even exquisite ; in particular, your personal account of the Maid far surpasses anything of the sort in Southey. I perceived all its excellences, on a first reading, as readily as now you have been removing a supposed film from my eyes. I was only struck with a certain faulty disproportion in the matter and the *style*, which I still think I perceive, between these lines and the former ones. I had an end in view : I wished to make you reject the poem only as being discordant with the other ; and, in subservience to that end, it was politically done in me to overpass and make no mention of merit, which, could you think me capable of *overlooking*, might reasonably damn for ever in your judgment all pretensions, in me, to be critical. There—I will be judged by Lloyd, whether I have not made a very handsome recantation. I was in the case of a man whose friend has asked him his opinion of a certain young lady. The deluded wight

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gives judgment against her *in toto*—doesn't like her face, her walk, her manners; finds fault with her eyebrows; can see no wit in her. His friend looks blank; he begins to smell a rat; wind veers about; he acknowledges her good sense, her judgment in dress, a certain simplicity of manners and honesty of heart, something too in her manners which gains upon you after a short acquaintance; and then her accurate pronunciation of the French language, and a pretty uncultivated taste in drawing. The reconciled gentleman smiles applause, squeezes him by the hand, and hopes he will do him the honour of taking a bit of dinner with Mrs. ——— and him, —a plain family dinner,—some day next week; “for, I suppose, you never heard we were married. I'm glad to see you like my wife, however; you'll come and see her, ha?” Now am I too proud to retract entirely? Yet I do perceive I am in some sort straitened. You are manifestly wedded to this poem; and what fancy has joined let no man separate. I turn me to the *Joan of Arc*, second book.

The solemn openings of it are with sounds which, Lloyd would say, “are silence to the mind.” The deep preluding strains are fitted to initiate the mind, with a pleasing awe, into the sublimest mysteries of theory concerning man's nature, and his noblest destination—the philosophy of a first cause—of subordinate agents in creation superior to man—the subserviency of

TO COLERIDGE

pagan worship and pagan faith to the introduction of a purer and more perfect religion, which you so elegantly describe as winning, with gradual steps, her difficult way northward from Bethabara. After all this cometh Joan, a *publican's* daughter, sitting on an ale-house *bench*, and marking the *swingings* of the *signboard*, finding a poor man, his wife, and six children, starved to death with cold, and thence roused into a state of mind proper to receive visions, emblematical of equality; which, what the devil Joan had to do with, I don't know, or indeed with the French and American revolutions; though that needs no pardon, it is executed so nobly. After all, if you perceive no disproportion, all argument is vain: I do not so much object to parts. Again, when you talk of building your fame on these lines in preference to the *Religious Musings*, I cannot help conceiving of you, and of the author of that, as two different persons, and I think you a very vain man.

I have been re-reading your letter. Much of it I *could* dispute; but with the latter part of it, in which you compare the two Joans with respect to their predispositions for fanaticism, I, *toto corde*, coincide; only I think that Southey's strength rather lies in the description of the emotions of the Maid under the weight of inspiration. These (I see no mighty difference between *her* describing them or *your* describing them), these if you only equal, the previous

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admirers of his poem, as is natural, will prefer his. If you surpass, prejudice will scarcely allow it, and I scarce think you will surpass, though your specimen at the conclusion (I am in earnest) I think very nigh equals them. And in an account of a fanatic or of a prophet, the description of her *emotions* is expected to be most highly finished. By the way, I spoke far too disparagingly of your lines, and I am ashamed to say, purposely. I should like you to specify or particularise. The story of the "Tottering Eld," of "his eventful years all come and gone," is too general. Why not make him a soldier, or some character, however, in which he has been witness to frequency of "cruel wrong and strange distress!" I think I should. When I laughed at the "miserable man crawling from beneath the coverture," I wonder I did not perceive that it was a laugh of horror—such as I have laughed at Dante's picture of the famished Ugolino. Without falsehood, I perceive an hundred beauties in your narrative. Yet I wonder you do not perceive something out-of-the-way, something unsimple and artificial in the expression, "voiced a sad tale." I hate made-dishes at the muses' banquet. I believe I was wrong in most of my other objections. But surely "hailed him immortal," adds nothing to the terror of the man's death, which it was your business to heighten, not diminish by a phrase which takes away all terror from it. I like that line, "They

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closed their eyes in sleep, nor knew 'twas death." Indeed there is scarce a line I do not like. "*Turbid* ecstasy," is surely not so good as what you *had* written, "troublous." Turbid rather suits the muddy kind of inspiration which London porter confers. The versification is, throughout, to my ears unexceptionable, with no disparagement to the measure of the *Religious Musings*, which is exactly fitted to the thoughts.

You were building your house on a rock when you rested your fame on that poem. I can scarce bring myself to believe that I am admitted to a familiar correspondence, and all the licence of friendship, with a man who writes blank verse like Milton. Now, this is delicate flattery, *indirect* flattery. Go on with your *Maid of Orleans*, and be content to be second to yourself. I shall become a convert to it when 'tis finished.

This afternoon I attend the funeral of my poor old aunt, who died on Thursday. I own I am thankful that the good creature has ended all her days of suffering and infirmity. She was to me the "cherisher of infancy," and one must fall on those occasions into reflections, which it would be commonplace to enumerate, concerning death, "of chance and change, and fate in human life." Good God, who could have foreseen all this but four months back! I had reckoned, in particular, on my aunt's living many years; she was a very hearty old woman.

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But she was a mere skeleton before she died, looked more like a corpse that had lain weeks in the grave, than one fresh dead. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun ; but if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Coleridge, why are we to live on after all the strength and beauty of existence is gone, when all the life of life is fled, as poor Burns expresses it ? Tell Lloyd I have had thoughts of turning Quaker, and have been reading, or am rather just beginning to read, a most capital book, good thoughts in good language, William Penn's *No Cross, no Crown*. I like it immensely. Unluckily I went to one of his meetings, tell him, in St. John Street, yesterday, and saw a man under all the agitations and workings of a fanatic, who believed himself under the influence of some "inevitable presence." This cured me of Quakerism. I love it in the books of Penn and Woolman ; but I detest the vanity of a man thinking he speaks by the Spirit, when what he says an ordinary man might say without all that quaking and trembling. In the midst of his inspiration (and the effects of it were most noisy) was handed into the midst of the meeting a most terrible blackguard Wapping sailor. The poor man, I believe, had rather have been in the hottest part of an engagement, for the congregation of broad-brims, together with the

TO COLERIDGE

ravings of the prophet, were too much for his gravity, though I saw even he had delicacy enough not to laugh out. And the inspired gentleman, though his manner was so supernatural, yet neither talked nor professed to talk anything more than good sober sense, common morality, with now and then a declaration of not speaking from himself. Among other things, looking back to his childhood and early youth, he told the meeting what a graceless young dog he had been ; that in his youth he had a good share of wit. Reader, if thou hadst seen the gentleman, thou wouldst have sworn that it must indeed have been many years ago, for his rueful physiognomy would have scared away the playful goddess from the meeting, where he presided, for ever. A wit ! a wit ! what could he mean ? Lloyd, it minded me of *Falkland* in the *Rivals*, "Am I full of wit and humour ? No, indeed you are not. Am I the life and soul of every company I come into ? No, it cannot be said you are." That hard-faced gentleman, a wit ! Why, Nature wrote on his fanatic forehead fifty years ago, "Wit never comes, that comes to all." I should be as scandalised at a *bon mot* issuing from his oracle-looking mouth, as to see Cato go down a country dance. God love you all ! You are very good to submit to be pleased with reading my nothings. 'Tis the privilege of friendship to talk nonsense, and to have her nonsense respected.—Yours ever, C. LAMB.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

LETTER XXIV.]

April 7, 1797.

Your last letter was dated the 10th of February ; in it you promised to write again the next day. At least, I did not expect so long, so unfriend-like a silence. There was a time, Col., when a remissness of this sort in a dear friend would have lain very heavy on my mind ; but latterly I have been too familiar with neglect to feel much from the semblance of it. Yet, to suspect one's self overlooked, and in the way to oblivion, is a feeling rather humbling ; perhaps, as tending to self-mortification, not unfavourable to the spiritual state. Still, as you meant to confer no benefit on the soul of your friend, you do not stand quite clear from the imputation of unkindliness (a word, by which I mean the diminutive of unkindness).

Lloyd tells me he has been very ill, and was on the point of leaving you. I addressed a letter to him at Birmingham : perhaps he got it not, and is still with you. I hope his ill-health has not prevented his attending to a request I made in it, that he would write again very soon to let me know how he was. I hope to God poor Lloyd is not very bad, or in a very bad way. Pray satisfy me about these things.

And then David Hartley was unwell ; and how is the small philosopher, the minute philosopher ? and David's mother ? Coleridge, I am not trifling ; nor are these matter-of-fact questions

TO COLERIDGE

only. You are all very dear and precious to me. Do what you will, Coleridge, you may hurt me and vex me by your silence, but you cannot estrange my heart from you all. I cannot scatter friendships like chuck-farthings, nor let them drop from mine hand like hour-glass sand. I have but two or three people in the world to whom I am more than indifferent, and I can't afford to whistle them off to the winds.

By the way, Lloyd may have told you about my sister. I told him. If not, I have taken her out of her confinement, and taken a room for her at Hackney, and spend my Sundays, holidays, etc., with her. She boards herself. In a little half-year's illness, and in such an illness, of such a nature, and of such consequences, to get her out into the world again, with a prospect of her never being so ill again,—this is to be ranked not among the common blessings of Providence. May that merciful God make tender my heart, and make me as thankful, as in my distress I was earnest, in my prayers. Congratulate me on an ever-present and never-alienable friend like her. And do, do insert, if you have not *lost*, my Dedication. It will have lost half its value by coming so late. If you really are going on with that volume, I shall be enabled in a day or two to send you a short poem to insert. Now, do answer this. Friendship, and acts of friendship, should be reciprocal, and free as the air. A friend should never be reduced to beg an alms of his fellow ;

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yet I will beg an alms : I entreat you to write, and tell me all about poor Lloyd, and all of you. God love and preserve you all ! C. LAMB.

LETTER XXV.]

April 15, 1797.

The above you will please to print immediately before the blank verse fragments. Tell me if you like it. I fear the latter half is unequal to the former, in parts of which I think you will discover a delicacy of pencilling not quite un-Spenser-like. The latter half aims at the *measure*, but has failed to attain the *poetry* of Milton in his *Comus*, and Fletcher in that exquisite thing ycleped the *Faithful Shepherdess*, where they both use eight-syllable lines. But this latter half was finished in great haste, and as a task, not from that impulse which affects the name of inspiration.

By the way, I have lit upon Fairfax's *Godfrey of Bullen*, for half-a-crown. Rejoice with me.

Poor dear Lloyd ! I had a letter from him yesterday ; his state of mind is truly alarming. He has, by his own confession, kept a letter of mine unopened three weeks ; afraid, he says, to open it, lest I should speak upbraidingly to him ; and yet this very letter of mine was in answer to one, wherein he informed me that an alarming illness had alone prevented him from writing. You will pray with me, I know, for his recovery ; for surely, Coleridge, an exquisiteness of feeling like this must border on derangement. But I

TO COLERIDGE

love him more and more, and will not give up the hope of his speedy recovery, as he tells me he is under Dr. Darwin's regimen.

God bless us all, and shield us from insanity, which is "the sorest malady of all."

My kind love to your wife and child.

Pray write now.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXVI.]

June 13, 1797.

I stared with wild wonderment to see thy well-known hand again. It revived many a pleasing recollection of an epistolary intercourse, of late strangely suspended, once the pride of my life. Before I even opened thy letter I figured to myself a sort of complacency which my little hoard at home would feel at receiving the new-comer into the little drawer where I keep my treasures of this kind. You have done well in writing to me. The little room (was it not a little one?) at the *Salutation* was already in the way of becoming a fading idea! It had begun to be classed in my memory with those "wanderings with a fair-hair'd maid," in the recollection of which I feel I have no property. You press me, very kindly do you press me, to come to Stowey. Obstacles, strong as death, prevent me at present; maybe I may be able to come before the year is out. Believe me, I will come as soon as I can; but I dread naming a probable time. It depends on fifty things, besides the expense,

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which is not nothing. Lloyd wants me to come to see him ; but, besides that you have a prior claim on me, I should not feel myself so much at home with him, till he gets a house of his own. As to Richardson, caprice may grant what caprice only refused ; and it is no more hardship, rightly considered, to be dependent on him for pleasure, than to lie at the mercy of the rain and sunshine for the enjoyment of a holiday : in either case we are not to look for a suspension of the laws of Nature. “Gryll will be Gryll.” Vide Spenser.

I could not but smile at the compromise you make with me for printing Lloyd's poems first ; but there is in nature, I fear, too many tendencies to envy and jealousy not to justify you in your apology. Yet, if any one is welcome to pre-eminence from me, it is Lloyd, for he would be the last to desire it. So pray, let his name *uniformly* precede mine, for it would be treating me like a child to suppose it could give me pain. Yet, alas ! I am not insusceptible of the bad passions. Thank God, I have the ingenuousness to be ashamed of them. I am dearly fond of Charles Lloyd ; he is all goodness ; and I have too much of the world in my composition to feel myself thoroughly deserving of his friendship.

Lloyd tells me that Sheridan put you upon writing your tragedy. I hope you are only Coleridgeising when you talk of finishing it in a few days. Shakspeare was a more modest man ; but you best know your own power.

TO COLERIDGE

Of my last poem you speak slightly.
Surely the longer stanzas were pretty tolerable :
at least there was one good line in it,

Thick-shaded trees, with dark green leaf rich clad.

To adopt your own expression, I call this a
“rich” line, a fine full line. And some others
I thought even beautiful. Believe me, my little
gentleman will feel some repugnance at riding
behind in the basket ; though, I confess, in
pretty good company. Your picture of idiocy,
with the sugar-loaf head, is exquisite ; but are
you not too severe upon our more favoured
brethren in fatuity ? Lloyd tells me how ill
your wife and child have been. I rejoice that
they are better. My kindest remembrances, and
those of my sister. I send you a trifling letter ;
but you have only to think that I have been
skimming the superficies of my mind, and found
it only froth. Now, do write again ! You
cannot believe how I long and love always to
hear about you. Yours most affectionately,

CHARLES LAMB.

Monday Night.

LETTER XXVII.]

June 24, 1797.

Did you seize the grand opportunity of seeing
Kosciusko while he was at Bristol ? I never
saw a hero ; I wonder how they look. I have

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

been reading a most curious romance-like work, called the *Life of John Bunclæ, Esq.* 'Tis very interesting, and an extraordinary compound of all manner of subjects, from the depth of the ludicrous to the heights of sublime religious truth. There is much abstruse science in it above my cut, and an infinite fund of pleasantry. John Bunclæ is a famous fine man, formed in Nature's most eccentric hour. I am ashamed of what I write ; but I have no topic to talk of. I see nobody. I sit and read, or walk alone, and hear nothing. I am quite lost to conversation from disuse ; and out of the sphere of my little family (who, I am thankful, are dearer and dearer to me every day) I see no face that brightens up at my approach. My friends are at a distance. Worldly hopes are at a low ebb with me, and unworldly thoughts are familiarised to me, though I occasionally indulge in them. Still I feel a calm not unlike content. I fear it is sometimes more akin to physical stupidity than to a heaven-flowing serenity and peace. What right have I to obtrude all this upon you ? and what is such a letter to you ? and if I come to Stowey, what conversation can I furnish to compensate my friend for those stores of knowledge and of fancy ; those delightful treasures of wisdom which I know he will open to me ? But it is better to give than to receive ; and I was a very patient hearer and docile scholar, in our winter evening meetings at Mr. May's ;

TO COLERIDGE

was I not, Col. ? What I have owed to thee,
my heart can ne'er forget.

God love you and yours !

C. L.

Saturday.

LETTER XXVIII.]

July 1797.

I discern a possibility of my paying you a visit next week. May I, can I, shall I come so soon ? Have you *room* for me, *leisure* for me ? and are you pretty well ? Tell me all this honestly—immediately. And by what *day* coach could I come soonest and nearest to Stowey ? A few months hence may suit you better ; certainly me, as well. If so, say so. I long, I yearn, with all the longings of a child do I desire to see you, to come among you—to see the young philosopher, to thank Sara for her last year's invitation in person—to read your tragedy—to read over together our little book—to breathe fresh air—to revive in me vivid images of "*Salutation* scenery." There is a sort of sacrilege in my letting such ideas slip out of my mind and memory. Still that Richardson remaineth—a thorn in the side of Hope, when she would lean towards Stowey. Here I will leave off, for I dislike to fill up this paper (which involves a question so connected with my heart and soul) with meaner matter, or subjects to me less interesting. I can talk, as I can think, nothing else.

Thursday.

C. LAMB.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

LETTER XXIX.]

(Late in) July 1797.

I am scarcely yet so reconciled to the loss of you, or so subsided into my wonted uniformity of feeling, as to sit calmly down to think of you and write to you. But I reason myself into the belief that those few and pleasant holidays shall not have been spent in vain. I feel improvement in the recollection of many a casual conversation. The names of Tom Poole, of Wordsworth and his good sister, with thine and Sara's, are become "familiar in my mouth as household words." You would make me very happy if you think W. has no objection, by transcribing for me that Inscription of his. I have some scattered sentences ever floating on my memory, teasing me that I cannot remember more of it. You may believe I will make no improper use of it. Believe me I can think now of many subjects on which I had planned gaining information from you ; but I forgot my "treasure's worth" while I possessed it. Your leg is now become to me a matter of much more importance ; and many a little thing, which when I was present with you seemed scarce to *indent* my notice, now presses painfully on my remembrance. Is the Patriot come? Are Wordsworth and his sister gone yet? I was looking out for John Thelwall all the way from Bridgewater ; and had I met him, I think it would have moved almost me to tears. You

TO COLERIDGE

will oblige me, too, by sending me my great-coat, which I left behind in the oblivious state the mind is thrown into at parting. Is it not ridiculous that I sometimes envy that great-coat lingering so cunningly behind ! At present I have none : so send it to me by a Stowey waggon, if there be such a thing, directing for C. L., No. 45, Chapel Street, Pentonville, near London. But above all, *that Inscription !* It will recall to me the tones of all your voices, and with them many a remembered kindness to one who could and can repay you all only by the silence of a grateful heart. I could not talk much while I was with you ; but my silence was not sullenness, nor I hope from any bad motive ; but, in truth, disuse has made me awkward at it. I know I behaved myself, particularly at Tom Poole's, and at Cruikshank's, most like a sulky child ; but company and converse are strange to me. It was kind in you all to endure me as you did.

Are you and your dear Sara—to me also very dear, because very kind—agreed yet about the management of little Hartley ? And how go on the little rogue's teeth ! I will see White to-morrow and he shall send you information on that matter ; but as perhaps I can do it as well, after talking with him, I will keep this letter open.

My love and thanks to you and all of you.

C. L.

Wednesday Evening.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

LETTER XXX.]

September 1797.

WRITTEN A TWELVEMONTH AFTER THE EVENTS

[*Friday next, Coleridge, is the day on which my Mother died.*]

Alas ! how I am changed ! Where be the tears
The sobs, and forced suspensions of the breath
And all the dull desertions of the heart
With which I hung o'er my dear mother's corse ?
Where be the blest subsidings of the storm
Within ; the sweet resignedness of hope
Drawn heavenward, and strength of filial love,
In which I bow'd me to my Father's will ?
My God and my Redeemer, keep not thou
My heart in brute and sensual thanklessness
Seal'd up, oblivious ever of that dear grace,
And health restor'd to my long-loved friend,
Long-lov'd, and worthy known ! Thou didst not leave
Her soul in death. O leave not now, my Lord,
Thy servants in far worse—in spiritual death
And darkness—blacker than those feared shadows
O' the valley all must tread. Lend us thy balms,
Thou dear Physician of the sin-sick soul,
And heal our cleansed bosoms of the wounds
With which the world hath pierc'd us thro' and thro' !
Give us new flesh, new birth ; Elect of heaven
May we become, in thine election sure
Contain'd, and to one purpose steadfast drawn—
Our souls' salvation.

Thou and I, dear friend,
With filial recognition sweet, shall know
One day the face of our dear mother in heaven,
And her remember'd looks of love shall greet
With answering looks of love, her placid smiles
Meet with a smile as placid, and her hand
With drops of fondness wet, nor fear repulse.

TO COLERIDGE

Be witness for me, Lord, I do not ask
Those days of vanity to return again
(Nor fitting me to ask, nor thee to give),
Vain loves, and “wanderings with a fair-hair’d maid” ;
(Child of the dust as I am), who so long
My foolish heart steep’d in idolatry,
And creature-loves. Forgive it, O my Maker !
If in a mood of grief, I sin almost
In sometimes brooding on the days long past,
(And from the grave of time wishing them back),
Days of a mother’s fondness to her child—
Her little one ! Oh, where be now those sports
And infant play-games ? Where the joyous troops
Of children, and the haunts I did so love ?
O my companions ! O ye loved names
Of friend, or playmate dear, gone are ye now.
Gone divers ways ; to honour and credit some ;
And some, I fear, to ignominy and shame !
I only am left, with unavailing grief
One parent dead to mourn, and see one live
Of all life’s joys bereft, and desolate :
Am left, with a few friends, and one above
The rest, found faithful in a length of years,
Contented as I may, to bear me on
T’ the not unpeaceful evening of a day
Made black by morning storms.

The following I wrote when I had returned
from Charles Lloyd, leaving him behind at
Burton, with Southey. To understand some of
it you must remember that at that time he was
very much perplexed in mind.

A stranger, and alone, I pass’d those scenes
We pass’d so late together ; and my heart
Felt something like desertion, as I look’d
Around me, and the pleasant voice of friend
Was absent, and the cordial look was there
No more, to smile on me. I thought on Lloyd—

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

All he had been to me ! And now I go
Again to mingle with a world impure ;
With men who make a mock of holy things,
Mistaken, and of man's best hope think scorn.
The world does much to warp the heart of man ;
And I may sometimes join its idiot laugh :
Of this I now complain not. Deal with me,
Omniscient Father, as thou judgest best,
And in *thy* season soften thou my heart.
I pray not for myself : I pray for him
Whose soul is sore perplexed. Shine thou on him,
Father of lights ! and in the difficult paths
Make plain his way before him : his own thoughts
May he not think—his own ends not pursue—
So shall he best perform thy will on earth.
Greatest and Best, Thy will be ever ours !

The former of these poems I wrote with unusual celerity t'other morning at office. I expect you to like it better than anything of mine ; Lloyd does, and I do myself.

You use Lloyd very ill, never writing to him. I tell you again that his is not a mind with which you should play tricks. He deserves more tenderness from you.

For myself, I must spoil a little passage of Beaumont and Fletcher's to adapt it to my feelings :—

“ I am prouder
That I was once your friend, tho' now forgot,
Than to have had another true to me.”

If you don't write to me now, as I told Lloyd, I shall get angry, and call you hard names—Manchineel, and I don't know what else. I wish you would send me my great-coat. The

TO COLERIDGE

snow and the rain season is at hand, and I have but a wretched old coat, once my father's, to keep 'em off, and that is transitory.

“When time drives flocks from field to fold,
When ways grow foul and blood gets cold,”

I shall remember where I left my coat. Meet emblem wilt thou be, old Winter, of a friend's neglect—cold, cold, cold ! C. LAMB.

LETTER XXXI.]

January 28, 1798.

You have writ me many kind letters, and I have answered none of them. I don't deserve your attentions. An unnatural indifference has been creeping on me since my last misfortunes, or I should have seized the first opening of a correspondence with *you*. To you I owe much, under God. In my brief acquaintance with you in London, your conversations won me to the better cause, and rescued me from the polluting spirit of the world. I might have been a worthless character without you ; as it is, I do possess a certain improvable portion of devotional feelings, tho' when I view myself in the light of divine truth, and not according to the common measures of human judgment, I am altogether corrupt and sinful. This is no cant. I am very sincere.

These last afflictions, Coleridge, have failed

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

to soften and bend my will. They found me unprepared. My former calamities produced in me a spirit of humility and a spirit of prayer. I thought they had sufficiently disciplined me ; but the event ought to humble me. If God's judgment now fail to take away from me the heart of stone, what more grievous trials ought I not to expect ? I have been very querulous, impatient under the rod—full of little jealousies and heart burnings. I had well-nigh quarrelled with Charles Lloyd ; and for no other reason, I believe, than that the good creature did all he could to make me happy. The truth is, I thought he tried to force my mind from its natural and proper bent. He continually wished me to be from home ; he was drawing me *from* the consideration of my poor dear Mary's situation, rather than assisting me to gain a proper view of it with religious consolations. I wanted to be left to the tendency of my own mind, in a solitary state, which, in times past, I knew had led to quietness and a patient bearing of the yoke. He was hurt that I was not more constantly with him ; but he was living with White, a man to whom I had never been accustomed to impart my *dearest feelings*, tho' from long habits of friendliness, and many a social and good quality, I loved him very much. I met company there sometimes—indiscriminate company. Any society almost, when I am in affliction, is sorely painful to me. I seem to

TO COLERIDGE

breathe more freely, to think more collectedly, to feel more properly and calmly, when alone. All these things the good creature did with the kindest intentions in the world, but they produced in me nothing but soreness and discontent. I became, as he complained, "jaundiced" towards him . . . but he has forgiven me ; and his smile, I hope, will draw all such humours from me. I am recovering, God be praised for it, a healthiness of mind, something like calmness ; but I want more religion. I am jealous of human helps and leaning-places. I rejoice in your good fortunes. May God at the last settle you !—You have had many and painful trials ; humanly speaking they are going to end ; but we should rather pray that discipline may attend us thro' the whole of our lives. . . . A careless and a dissolute spirit has advanced upon *me* with large strides. Pray God that my present afflictions may be sanctified to me ! Mary is recovering ; but I see no opening yet of a situation for her. Your invitation went to my very heart ; but you have a power of exciting interest, of leading all hearts captive, too forcible to admit of Mary's being with you. I consider her as perpetually on the brink of madness. I think you would almost make her dance within an inch of the precipice ; she must be with duller fancies, and cooler intellects. I know a young man of this description, who has suited her these twenty years, and may live to do so

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

still, if we are one day restored to each other. In answer to your suggestions of occupation for me, I must say that I do not think my capacity altogether suited for disquisitions of that kind. . . . I have read little, I have a very weak memory, and retain little of what I read ; am unused to compositions in which any methodising is required ; but I thank you sincerely for the hint, and shall receive it as far as I am able ; that is, endeavour to engage my mind in some constant and innocent pursuit. I know my capacities better than you do.

Accept my kindest love, and believe me yours,
as ever.

C. L.

*S. T. Coleridge,
at the Reverend A. Rowe's,
Shrewsbury.*

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

LETTER XXXII.]

July 28, 1798.

Dear Southey—I am ashamed that I have not thanked you before this for the *Joan of Arc*, but I did not know your address, and it did not occur to me to write through Cottle. The poem delighted me, and the notes amused me ; but methinks she of Neufchatel, in the print, holds her sword too “like a dancer.” I sent your notice to Phillips, particularly requesting an

TO SOUTHEY

immediate insertion, but I suppose it came too late. I am sometimes curious to know what progress you make in that same "Calendar": whether you insert the nine worthies and Whittington? what you do or how you can manage when two Saints meet and quarrel for precedence? Martlemas, and Candlemas, and Christmas, are glorious themes for a writer like you, antiquity-bitten, smit with the love of boars' heads and rosemary; but how you can ennoble the 1st of April I know not. By the way, I had a thing to say, but a certain false modesty has hitherto prevented me: perhaps I can best communicate my wish by a hint. My birthday is on the 10th of February, New Style; but if it interferes with any remarkable event, why rather than my country should lose her fame, I care not if I put my nativity back eleven days. Fine family patronage for your "Calendar," if that old lady of prolific memory were living, who lies (or lyes) in some church in London (saints forgive me, but I have forgot *what* church), attesting that enormous legend of as many children as days in the year. I marvel her impudence did not grasp at a leap-year. Three hundred and sixty-five dedications, and all in a family! You might spit, in spirit, on the oneness of Mæcenās's patronage!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to the eternal regret of his native Devonshire, emigrates to Westphalia: "Poor Lamb" (these were his

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

last words), "if he wants any *knowledge*, he may apply to me." In ordinary cases I thanked him. I have an "Encyclopædia" at hand ; but on such an occasion as going over to a German university, I could not refrain from sending him the following propositions, to be by him defended or oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Göttingen.

THESES QUÆDAM THEOLOGICÆ

I

"Whether God loves a lying angel better than a true man ?"

II

"Whether the archangel Uriel *could* knowingly affirm an untruth, and whether, if he *could*, he *would* ?"

III

"Whether honesty be an angelic virtue, or not rather belonging to that class of qualities which the schoolmen term 'virtutes minus splendidæ, et hominis et terræ nimis participes' ?"

IV

"Whether the seraphim ardentes do not manifest their goodness by the way of vision and theory ? and whether practice be not a sub-celestial, and merely human virtue ?"

TO SOUTHEY

V

“Whether the higher order of seraphim
illuminati ever *sneer*?”

VI

“Whether pure intelligences can *love*, or
whether they can love anything besides pure
intellect?”

VII

“Whether the beatific vision be anything
more or less than a perpetual representment to
each individual angel of his own present attain-
ments, and future capabilities, something in the
manner of mortal looking-glasses?”

VIII

“Whether an ‘immortal and amenable soul’
may not come *to be damned at last, and the man
never suspect it beforehand*?”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge hath not deigned an
answer. Was it impertinent of me to avail
myself of that offered source of knowledge?

Wishing *Madoc* may be born into the world
with as splendid promise as the second birth, or
purification, of the Maid of Neufchatel,—I
remain yours sincerely,

C. LAMB.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

I hope Edith is better ; my kindest remembrances to her. You have a good deal of trifling to forgive in this letter.

“Love and remembrances to Cottle.”

LETTER XXXIII.]

October 18, 1798.

Dear Southey—I have at last been so fortunate as to pick up Wither’s Emblems for you, that “old book and quaint,” as the brief author of *Rosamund Gray* hath it ; it is in a most detestable state of preservation, and the cuts are of a fainter impression than I have seen. Some child, the curse of antiquaries and bane of bibliopical rarities, hath been dabbling in some of them with its paint and dirty fingers ; and, in particular, hath a little sullied the author’s own portraiture, which I think valuable, as the poem that accompanies it is no common one ; this last excepted, the Emblems are far inferior to old Quarles. I once told you otherwise, but I had not then read old Quarles with attention. I have picked up, too, another copy of Quarles for ninepence !!! O tempora ! O lectores ! so that if you have lost or parted with your own copy, say so, and I can furnish you, for you prize these things more than I do. You will be amused, I think, with honest Wither’s “Supersedeas to all them whose custom it is, without any deserving, to importune authors to give unto them their

TO SOUTHEY

books." I am sorry 'tis imperfect, as the lottery board annexed to it also is. Methinks you might modernise and elegantise this Supersedeas, and place it in front of your *Joan of Arc*, as a gentle hint to Messrs. Parke, etc. One of the happiest emblems, and comicaest cuts, is the owl and little chirpers, page 63.

Wishing you all amusement, which your true emblem-fancier can scarce fail to find in even bad emblems, I remain your caterer to command,

C. LAMB.

Love and respects to Edith. I hope she is well. How does your Calendar prosper?

LETTER XXXIV.]

October 29, 1798.

Dear Southey—I thank you heartily for the Eclogue; it pleases me mightily, being so full of picture work and circumstances. I find no fault in it, unless perhaps that Joanna's ruin is a catastrophe too trite; and this is not the first or second time you have clothed your indignation, in verse, in a tale of ruined innocence. The old lady, spinning in the sun, I hope would not disdain to claim some kindred with old Margaret. I could almost wish you to vary some circumstances in the conclusion. A gentleman seducer has so often been described in prose and verse. What if you had accomplished Joanna's ruin by

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

the clumsy arts and rustic gifts of some country-fellow? I am thinking, I believe, of the song—

“ An old woman clothed in gray,
Whose daughter was charming and young,
And she was deluded away
By Roger’s false flattering tongue.”

A Roger-Lothario would be a novel character ; I think you might paint him very well. You may think this a very silly suggestion, and so indeed it is ; but, in good truth, nothing else but the first words of that foolish ballad put me upon scribbling my *Rosamund*. But I thank you heartily for the poem. Not having anything of my own to send you in return (though, to tell truth, I am at work upon something, which, if I were to cut away and garble, perhaps I might send you an extract or two that might not displease you ; but I will not do that ; and whether it will come to anything I know not, for I am as slow as a Fleming painter, when I compose anything) I will crave leave to put down a few lines of old Christopher Marlow’s ; I take them from his tragedy, *Jew of Malta*. The Jew is a famous character, quite out of nature ; but, when we consider the terrible idea our simple ancestors had of a Jew, not more to be discommended for a certain discolouring (I think Addison calls it) than the witches and fairies of Marlow’s mighty successor. The scene is betwixt *Barabbas*, the Jew, and *Ithamore*, a Turkish captive, exposed to sale for a slave.

TO SOUTHEY

BARABBAS

(*A precious rascal*)

“ As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls ;
Sometimes I go about, and poison wells ;
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
I am content to lose some of my crowns,
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'm go pinion'd along by my door.
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practise first upon the Italian :
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in use
With digging graves, and ringing dead men's knells :
And after that was I an engineer,
And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,
Under pretence of serving Charles the Fifth,
Slew friends and enemy with my stratagems.
Then after that was I an usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I fill'd the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals,
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,
How I with interest had tormented him.”

(Now hear Ithamore, the other gentle nature.)

ITHAMORE

(*A comical dog*)

“ Faith, master, and I have spent my time
In setting Christian villages on fire,
Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley slaves.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

One time I was an hostler at an inn,
And in the night time secretly would I steal
To travellers' chambers, and there cut their throats.
Once at Jerusalem, where the pilgrims kneel'd,
I strew'd powder on the marble stones,
And therewithal their knees would rankle so,
That I have laugh'd a good to see the cripples
Go limping home to Christendom on stilts."

BARABBAS

"Why, this is something."

There is a mixture of the ludicrous and the terrible in these lines, brimful of genius and antique invention, that at first reminded me of your old description of cruelty in hell, which was in the true Hogarthian style. I need not tell *you* that Marlow was author of that pretty madrigal, "Come live with me and be my Love," and of the tragedy of Edward II., in which are certain *lines* unequalled in our English tongue. Honest Walton mentions the said madrigal under the denomination of "certain smooth verses made long since by Kit Marlow."

I am glad you have put me on the scent after old Quarles. If I do not put up those eclogues, and that shortly, say I am no true-nosed hound. I have had a letter from Lloyd; the young metaphysician of Caius is well, and is busy recanting the new heresy, metaphysics, for the old dogma, Greek. My sister, I thank you, is quite well. She had a slight attack the other

TO ROBERT LLOYD

day, which frightened me a good deal, but it went off unaccountably. Love and respects to Edith.

Yours sincerely,

C. LAMB.

TO ROBERT LLOYD

LETTER XXXV.]

October 1798.

My dear Robert—I am a good deal occupied with a calamity near home, but not so much as to prevent my thinking about you with the warmest affection—you are among my very dearest friends. I know you will feel deeply when you hear that my poor sister is unwell again; one of her old disorders, but I trust it will hold no longer than her former illnesses have done. Do not imagine, Robert, that I sink under this misfortune; I have been season'd to such events, and think I could bear anything tolerably well. My own health is left me, and my good spirits, and I have some duties to perform—these duties shall be *my object*. I wish, Robert, *you* could find an object. I know the painfulness of vacuity, all its achings and inexplicable longings. I wish to God I could recommend any plan to you. Stock your mind well with religious knowledge; discipline it to wait with patience for duties that may be your lot in life; prepare yourself not to expect too much out of yourself; *read* and *think*. This is all commonplace advice, I know. I know,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

too, that it is easy to give advice which in like circumstances we might not follow ourselves. You must depend upon yourself—there will come a time when you will wonder you were not more content. I know you will excuse my saying any more.

Be assured of my kindest, warmest affection.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXXVI.]

October (later) 1798.

My dear Robert—Mary is better, and I trust that she will yet be restored to me. I am in good spirits, so do not be anxious about me. I hope you get reconciled to your situation. The worst in it is that you have no *friend* to talk to—but wait in patience, and you will in good time make friends. The having a friend is not indispensably necessary to virtue or happiness. Religion removes those barriers of sentiment which partition us from the disinterested love of our brethren—we are commanded to love our enemies, to do good to those that hate us ; how much more is it our duty then to cultivate a forbearance and complacence towards those who only differ from us in dispositions and ways of thinking ? There is always, without very unusual care there must always be, something of Self in friendship ; we love our friend because he is like ourselves ; can consequences altogether unmix'd and pure be reasonably expected from such a

TO ROBERT LLOYD

source—do not even the publicans and sinners the same? Say, that you love a friend for his moral qualities, is it not rather because those qualities resemble what you fancy your own? This, then, is not without danger. The only true cement of a valuable friendship, the only thing that even makes it not sinful, is when two friends propose to become mutually of benefit to each other in a moral or religious way. But even this friendship is perpetually liable to the mixture of something not pure; we love our friend, because he is *ours*—so we do our money, our wit, our knowledge, our virtue; and wherever this sense of APPROPRIATION and PROPERTY enters, so much is to be subtracted from the value of that friendship or that virtue. Our duties are to do good, expecting nothing again; to bear with contrary dispositions; to be candid and forgiving, not to crave and long after a communication of sentiment and feeling, but rather to avoid dwelling upon those feelings, however good, because they are our own. A man may be intemperate and selfish who indulges in *good feelings* for the mere pleasure they give him. I do not wish to deter you from making a friend, a true friend, and such a friendship, where the parties are not blind to each other's faults, is very useful and valuable. I perceive a tendency in you to this error, Robert. I know you have chosen to take up an high opinion of my moral worth, but I say it before God, and I do not lie, you are mistaken

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

in me. I could not bear to lay open all my failings to you, for the sentiment of shame would be too pungent. Let this be as an example to you. Robert, friends fall off, friends mistake us, they change, they grow unlike us, they go away, they die ; but God is everlasting and incapable of change, and to Him we may look with cheerful, unpresumptuous hope, while we discharge the duties of life in situations more untowardly than yours. You complain of the impossibility of improving yourself, but be assured that the opportunity of improvement lies more in the mind than the situation. Humble yourself before God, cast out the selfish principle, wait in patience, do good in every way you can to all sorts of people, never be easy to neglect a duty tho' a small one, praise God for all, and see His hand in all things, and He will in time raise you up *many friends*—or be Himself instead an unchanging friend. God bless you.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XXXVII.]

October (later) 1798.

My dear Robert—I acknowledge I have been sadly remiss of late. If I descend to any excuse (and all excuses that come short of a direct denial of a charge are poor creatures at best), it must be taken from my state of mind for some time past, which has been stupid rather, and unfilled with any object, than occupied, as you

TO ROBERT LLOYD

may imagine, with any favourite idea to the exclusion of friend Robert. You, who are subject to all the varieties of the mind, will give me credit in this.

I am sadly sorry that you are relapsing into your old complaining strain. I wish I could adapt my consolations to your disease, but, alas! I have none to offer which your own mind, and the suggestions of books, cannot better supply. Are you the first whose situation hath not been exactly squar'd to his ideas? or rather, will you find me that man who does not complain of the one thing wanting? That thing obtained, another wish will start up. While this eternal craving of the mind keeps up its eternal hunger, no feast that my palate knows of will satisfy that hunger till we come to drink the new wine (whatever it be) in the Kingdom of the Father. See what trifles disquiet us.—You are Unhappy because your Parents expect you to attend meetings. I don't know much of Quakers' meetings, but I believe I may moderately reckon them to take up the space of six hours in the week. Six hours to please your parents—and that time not absolutely lost. Your mind remains, you may think, and plan, remember, and foresee, and do all human acts of mind sitting as well as walking. You are quiet at meeting: one likes to be so sometimes; you may advantageously crowd your day's devotions into that space. Nothing you see or hear there can be unfavourable to it

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—you are for that time at least exempt from the counting-house, and your parents cannot chide you there; surely at so small expense you cannot grudge to observe the Fifth Commandment. I decidedly consider your refusal as a breach of that God-descended precept—Honour and observe thy parents in all lawful things. Silent worship cannot be *Unlawful*; there is no Idolatry, no invocation of saints, no bowing before the consecrated wafer in all this, nothing which a wise man would refuse, or a good man fear to do. What is it? Sitting a few hours in a week with certain good people who call *that* worship. You subscribe to no articles—if your mind wanders, it is no crime in you who do not give credit to these infusions of the spirit. They sit in a temple, you sit as in a room adjoining, only do not disturb their pious work with gabbling, nor your own necessary peace with heart-burnings at your not ill-meaning parents, nor a silly contempt of the work which is going on before you. I know that if my parents were to live again, I would do more things to please them than merely sitting still six hours in a week. Perhaps I enlarge too much on this affair, but indeed your objection seems to me ridiculous, and involving in it a principle of frivolous and vexatious resistance.

You have often borne with my freedoms, bear with me once more in this. If I did not love you, I should not trouble myself whether you

TO SOUTHEY

went to meeting or not—whether you conform'd or not to the will of your father.

I am now called off to dinner before one o'clock ; being a holyday we dine early, for Mary and me to have a long walk afterwards. My kindest remembrance to Charles.

God give him all joy and quiet.

Mary sends her LOVE.

C. L.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

LETTER XXXVIII.]

November 3, 1798.

I have read your Eclogue repeatedly, and cannot call it bald, or without interest ; the cast of it and the design are completely original, and may set people upon thinking. It is as poetical as the subject requires, which asks no poetry ; but it is defective in pathos. The woman's own story is the tamest part of it ; I should like you to remould that : it too much resembles the young maid's history ; both had been in service. Even the omission would not injure the poem : after the words "growing wants," you might, not unconnectedly, introduce "look at that little chub" down to "welcome one." And, decidedly, I would have you end it somehow thus,—

"Give them at least this evening a good meal.

[*Gives her money.*

Now, fare thee well ; hereafter you have taught me

To give sad meaning to the village bells," etc.,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

which would leave a stronger impression (as well as more pleasingly recall the beginning of the Eclogue) than the present commonplace reference to a better world, which the woman "must have heard at church." I should like you too a good deal to enlarge the most striking part, as it might have been, of the poem—"Is it idleness?" etc. : that affords a good field for dwelling on sickness, and inabilities, and old age. And you might also a good deal enrich the piece with a picture of a country wedding. The woman might very well, in a transient fit of oblivion, dwell upon the ceremony and circumstances of her own nuptials six years ago, the snugness of the bridegroom, the feastings, the cheap merriment, the welcomings, and the secret envyings of the maidens ; then dropping all this, recur to her present lot. I do not know that I can suggest anything else, or that I have suggested anything new or material. I do not much prefer this Eclogue to the last. Both are inferior to the former.

"And when he came to shake me by the hand,
And spake as kindly to me as he used,
I hardly knew his voice—"

is the only passage that affected me. When servants speak, their language ought to be plain, and not much raised above the common, else I should find fault with the pathos of this passage,—

TO SOUTHEY

“And when I heard the bell strike out,
I thought (what ?) that I had never heard it toll
So dismally before.”

I like the destruction of the martens' old nests hugely, having just such a circumstance in my memory. I shall be very glad to see your remaining Eclogue, if not too much trouble, as you give me reason to expect it will be the second best. I shall be very glad to see some more poetry ; though, I fear, your trouble in transcribing will be greater than the service my remarks may do them.

Yours affectionately,

C. LAMB.

I cut my letter short because I am called off to business.

LETTER XXXIX.]

November 8, 1798.

I perfectly accord with your opinion of old Wither ; Quarles is a wittier writer, but Wither lays more hold of the heart. Quarles thinks of his audience when he lectures ; Wither soliloquizes in company from a full heart. What wretched stuff are the “Divine Fancies” of Quarles ! Religion appears to him no longer valuable than it furnishes matter for quibbles and riddles ; he turns God's grace into wantonness. Wither is like an old friend, whose warm-heartedness and estimable qualities make us wish he possessed more genius, but at the

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same time make us willing to dispense with that want. I always love Wither, and sometimes admire Quarles. Still that portrait poem is a fine one; and the extract from "Shepherds' Hunting" places him in a starry height far above Quarles. If you wrote that review in the *Critical Review*, I am sorry you are so sparing of praise to the *Ancient Marinere*. So far from calling it as you do, with some wit, but more severity, a "Dutch Attempt," etc., I call it a right English attempt, and a successful one, to dethrone German sublimity. You have selected a passage fertile in unmeaning miracles, but have passed by fifty passages as miraculous as the miracles they celebrate. I never so deeply felt the pathetic as in that part,

"A spring of love gush'd from my heart,
And I bless'd them unaware."

It stung me into high pleasure through sufferings. Lloyd does not like it; his head is too metaphysical, and your taste too correct; at least I must allege something against you both, to excuse my own dotage—

"So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seem'd there to be!"—etc. etc.

But you allow some elaborate beauties: you should have extracted 'em. The *Ancient Marinere* plays more tricks with the mind than that last poem, which is yet one of the finest written.

TO ROBERT LLOYD

But I am getting too dogmatical ; and before
I degenerate into abuse, I will conclude with
assuring you that I am

Sincerely yours,

C. LAMB.

I am going to meet Lloyd at Ware on
Saturday, to return on Sunday. Have you any
commands or commendations to the meta-
physician ? I shall be very happy if you will
dine or spend any time with me in your way
through the great ugly city ; but I know you
have other ties upon you in these parts.

Love and respects to Edith, and friendly
remembrances to Cottle.

TO ROBERT LLOYD

LETTER XL.]

November 13, 1798.

Now 'tis Robert's turn.

My dear Robert—One passage in your
Letter a little displeas'd me. The rest was
nothing but kindness, which Robert's letters are
ever brimful of. You say that "this World to
you seems drain'd of all its sweets !" At first I
had hoped you only meant to insinuate the high
price of Sugar ! but I am afraid you meant more.
O Robert, I don't know what you call sweet.
Honey and the honeycomb, roses and violets, are

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

yet in the earth. The sun and moon yet reign in Heaven, and the lesser lights keep up their pretty twinklings. Meats and drinks, sweet sights and sweet smells, a country walk, spring and autumn, follies and repentance, quarrels and reconcilements, have all a sweetness by turns. Good humour and good nature, friends at home that love you, and friends abroad that miss you, you possess all these things, and more innumerable, and these are all sweet things. . . . You may extract honey from everything ; do not go a gathering after gall. The Bees are wiser in their generation than the race of sonnet writers and complainers, Bowles's and Charlotte Smiths, and all that tribe, who can see no joys but what are past, and fill people's heads with notions of the unsatisfying nature of Earthly comforts. I assure you I find this world a very pretty place. My kind love to all your Sisters and to Thomas—he never writes to me—and tell Susanna I forgive her. C. LAMB.

London, the 13th November 1798.

LETTER XLI.]

November 20, 1798.

As the little copy of verses I sent gave Priscilla and Robert some pleasure, I now send them another little tale, which is all I can send, for my stock will be exhausted. . . . 'Tis a tale of witchcraft, told by an old Steward in the family to Margaret, the ward of Sir Walter

TO ROBERT LLOYD

Woodvil. *Who* Sir Walter is you may come to know bye and bye, when I have finish'd a Poem, from which this and the other are extracts, and all the extracts I can make without mutilating :

OLD STEWARD. One summer night Sir Walter, as it
chanc'd,
Was pacing to and fro in the avenue
That westward fronts our house,
Among those aged oaks said to have been planted
Three hundred years ago
By a neighb'ring Prior of the Woodvil name ;
But so it was,
Being o'er task'd in thought he heeded not
The importune suit of one who stood by the gate,
And begg'd an alms.
Some say, he shov'd her rudely from the gate
With angry chiding ; but I can never think,
(Sir Walter's nature hath a sweetness in it,)
That he could treat a woman, an old woman
With such discourtesy,
For old she was who begg'd an alms of him.
Well, he refus'd her.
(Whether for importunity I know not,
Or that she came between his meditations,)
But better had he met a Lion in the Streets,
Than this old woman that night,
For she was one who practis'd the black arts,
And serv'd the Devil, being since burnt for witchcraft.
She look'd at him like one that meant to blast him,
And with a frightful noise,
('Twas partly like a woman's voice,
And partly like the hissing of a snake,)
She nothing spake but this : Sir Walter told the words.

“ A mischief, mischief, mischief,
And a nine times killing curse,
By day and by night, to the captive wight,
Who shakes the poor, like snakes, from his door,

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And shuts up the womb of his purse :
And a mischief, mischief, mischief,
And a ninefold with'ring curse—
For that shall come to thee, that will undo thee,
Both all that thou fear'st and worst."

These words four times repeated, she departed
Leaving Sir Walter like a man, beneath
Whose feet a scaffolding had suddenly fall'n.

MARGARET. A terrible curse !

OLD STEWARD. O Lady ! such bad things are said of
that old woman,

You would be loth to hear them !

As, namely, that the milk she gave was sour,
And the babe, who suck'd her, shrivell'd like a mandrake*
And things besides, with a bigger horror in them
Almost, I think, unlawful to be told !

MARGARET. Then I must never hear them. But
proceed,

And say what follow'd on the witch's curse.

OLD STEWARD. Nothing immediate ; but some nine
months after

Young Stephen Woodvil suddenly fell sick,
And none could tell what ail'd him ; for he lay,
And pin'd, and pin'd, till all his hair came off,
And he, that was full flesh'd, became as thin
As a two months' babe that has been starv'd in the nursing.
And sure, I think,
He bore his illness like a little child ;
With such rare sweetness, and dumb melancholy,
He strove to clothe his agony in smiles,
Which he would force up in his poor pale cheeks,
Like ill-tim'd guests that had no proper dwelling there.
And, when they ask'd him his complaint, he laid
His hand upon his heart to show the place
Where Susan came to him a nights, he said,
And prick'd him with a pin.
And thereupon Sir Walter call'd to mind
The beggar witch who stood in the gateway,
And begg'd an alms.

TO SOUTHEY

MARGARET. And so he died ?

OLD STEWARD. 'Tis thought so.

MARGARET. But did the witch confess ?

OLD STEWARD. All this and more at her death.

MARGARET. I do not love to credit tales of magic.
Heav'n's music, which is order, seems unstrung,
And this brave world,
Creation's beauteous workmanship, unbeautify'd,
Disorder'd, marr'd, where such strange things are acted.

* A *mandrake* is a root resembling the human form, as sometimes a carrot does, and the old superstition is, that when the mandrake is torn out of the earth a dreadful shriek is heard, which makes all who hear it go mad. 'Tis a fatal poison besides.

I will here conclude my tiny portion of Prose with hoping you may like the story, and my kind remembrances to all. C. LAMB.

Write soon, Robert.

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

LETTER XLII.]

November 28, 1798.

I can have no objection to your printing "Mystery of God" with my name, and all due acknowledgments for the honour and favour of the communication ; indeed, 'tis a poem that can dishonour no name. Now, that is in the true strain of modern modesto vanitas. . . . But for the sonnet, I heartily wish it, as I thought

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

it was, dead and forgotten. If the exact circumstances under which I wrote could be known or told, it would be an interesting sonnet ; but to an indifferent and stranger reader it must appear a very bald thing, certainly inadmissible in a compilation. I wish you could affix a different name to the volume. There is a contemptible book, a wretched assortment of vapid feelings, entitled *Pratt's Gleanings*, which hath damned and impropriated the title for ever. Pray think of some other. The gentleman is better known (better had he remained unknown) by an Ode to Benevolence, written and spoken for and at the annual dinner of the Humane Society, who walk in procession once a year, with all the objects of their charity before them, to return God thanks for giving them such benevolent hearts.

I like "Bishop Bruno," but not so abundantly as your "Witch Ballad," which is an exquisite thing of its kind.

I showed my "Witch" and "Dying Lover" to Dyer last night ; but George could not comprehend how *that* could be poetry which did not go upon ten feet, as George and his predecessor had taught it to do ; so George read me some lectures on the distinguishing qualities of the Ode, the Epigram, and the Epic, and went home to illustrate his doctrine, by correcting a proof sheet of his own Lyrics. George writes odes where the rhymes, like fashionable

TO SOUTHEY

man and wife, keep a comfortable distance of six or eight lines apart, and calls that "observing the laws of verse!" George tells you, before he recites, that you must listen with great attention, or you'll miss the rhymes. I did so, and found them pretty exact. George, speaking of the dead Ossian, exclaimeth, "Dark are the poet's eyes!" I humbly represented to him that his own eyes were dark, and many a living bard's besides, and recommended "Closed are the poet's eyes." But that would not do. I found there was an antithesis between the darkness of his eyes and the splendour of his genius; and I acquiesced.

Your recipe for a Turk's poison is invaluable, and truly Marlowish. . . . Lloyd objects to "shutting up the womb of his purse" in my curse (which, for a Christian witch in a Christian country, is not too mild, I hope). Do you object? I think there is a strangeness in the idea, as well as "shaking the poor like snakes from his door," which suits the speaker. Witches illustrate, as fine ladies do, from their own familiar objects, and snakes and the shutting up of wombs are in their way. I don't know that this last charge has been before brought against 'em nor either the sour milk or the mandrake babe; but I affirm these be things a witch would do if she could.

My Tragedy will be a medley (as I intend it to be a medley) of laughter and tears, prose and

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

verse, and in some places rhyme, songs, wit, pathos, humour, and, if possible, sublimity ; at least it is not a fault in my intention if it does not comprehend most of these discordant atoms. Heaven send they dance not the "Dance of Death !" I hear that the Two Noble Englishmen have parted no sooner than they set foot on German earth ; but I have not heard the reason. Possibly to give moralists an handle to exclaim, "Ah me ! what things are perfect ?" I think I shall adopt your emendation in the "Dying Lover," though I do not myself feel the objection against "Silent Prayer."

My tailor has brought me home a new coat lapelled, with a velvet collar. He assures me everybody wears velvet collars now. Some are born fashionable, some achieve fashion, and others, like your humble servant, have fashion thrust upon them. The rogue has been making inroads hitherto by modest degrees, foisting upon me an additional button, recommending gaiters ; but to come upon me thus, in a full tide of luxury, neither becomes him as a tailor nor the ninth of a man. My meek gentleman was robbed the other day, coming with his wife and family in a one-horse shay from Hampstead. The villains rifled him of four guineas, some shillings and half-pence, and a bundle of customers' measures, which they swore were bank notes. They did not shoot him, and when they rode off he address them with profound

TO SOUTHEY

gratitude, making a congee: "Gentlemen, I wish you good-night, and we are very much obliged to you that you have not used us ill!" And this is the cuckoo that has had the audacity to foist upon me ten buttons on a side, and a black velvet collar! A cursed ninth of a scoundrel!

When you write to Lloyd, he wishes his Jacobin correspondents to address him as *Mr.* C. L. Love and respects to Edith. I hope she is well.

Yours sincerely,

C. LAMB.

LETTER XLIII.]

December 27, 1798.

Dear Southey—Your friend John May has formerly made kind offers to Lloyd of serving me in the India House, by the interest of his friend Sir Francis Baring. It is not likely that I shall ever put his goodness to the test on my own account, for my prospects are very comfortable; but I know a man, a young man, whom he could serve through the same channel, and, I think, would be disposed to serve if he were acquainted with his case. This poor fellow (whom I know just enough of to vouch for his strict integrity and worth) has lost two or three employments from illness, which he cannot regain; he was once insane, and, from the distressful uncertainty of his livelihood, has reason to apprehend a return of that malady.

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He has been for some time dependent on a woman whose lodger he formerly was, but who can ill afford to maintain him; and I know that on Christmas night last he actually walked about the streets all night, rather than accept of her bed, which she offered him, and offered herself to sleep in the kitchen; and that, in consequence of that severe cold, he is labouring under a bilious disorder, besides a depression of spirits, which incapacitates him from exertion when he most needs it. For God's sake, Southey, if it does not go against you to ask favours, do it now; ask it as for me: but do not do a violence to your feelings, because he does not know of this application, and will suffer no disappointment. What I meant to say was this,—there are in the India House, what are called *extra clerks*, not on the establishment, like me, but employed in extra business, by-jobs; these get about £50 a year, or rather more, but never rise. A director can put in at any time a young man in this office, and it is by no means considered so great a favour as making an established clerk. He would think himself as rich as an emperor if he could get such a certain situation, and be relieved from those disquietudes which, I do fear, may one day bring back his distemper.

You know John May better than I do, but I know enough to believe that he is a good man. He did make me that offer I have mentioned,

TO SOUTHEY

but you will perceive that such an offer cannot authorise me in applying for another person.

But I cannot help writing to you on the subject, for the young man is perpetually before my eyes, and I shall feel it a crime not to strain all my petty interest to do him service, though I put my own delicacy to the question by so doing. I have made one other unsuccessful attempt already. At all events I will thank you to write, for I am tormented with anxiety.

C. LAMB.

LETTER XLIV.]

January 21, 1799.

I am requested by Lloyd to excuse his not replying to a kind letter received from you. He is at present situated in most distressful family perplexities, which I am not at liberty to explain, but they are such as to demand all the strength of his mind, and quite exclude any attention to foreign objects. His brother Robert (the flower of his family) hath eloped from the persecutions of his father, and has taken shelter with me. What the issue of his adventure will be, I know not. He hath the sweetness of an angel in his heart, combined with admirable firmness of purpose ; an uncultivated, but very original, and I think superior, genius. But this step of his is but a small part of their family troubles.

I am to blame for not writing to you before

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

on *my own account* ; but I know you can dispense with the expressions of gratitude, or I should have thanked you before for all May's kindness. He has liberally supplied the person I spoke to you of with money, and had procured him a situation just after himself had lighted upon a similar one, and engaged too far to recede. But May's kindness was the same, and my thanks to you and him are the same. May went about on this business as if it had been his own. But you knew John May before this, so I will be silent.

I shall be very glad to hear from you when convenient. I do not know how your Calendar and other affairs thrive ; but above all, I have not heard a great while of your "Madoc"—the *opus magnum*. I would willingly send you something to give a value to this letter ; but I have only one slight passage to send you, scarce worth the sending, which I want to edge in somewhere into my play, which, by the way, hath not received the addition of ten lines, besides, since I saw you. A father, old Walter Woodvil (the witch's *protégé*), relates this of his son John, who "fought in adverse armies," being a royalist, and his father a parliamentary man :—

"I saw him in the day of Worcester fight,
Whither he came at twice seven years,
Under the discipline of the Lord Falkland
(His uncle by the mother's side,
Who gave his youthful politics a bent
Quite *from* the principles of his father's house) ;
There did I see this valiant Lamb of Mars,

TO SOUTHEY

This sprig of honour, this unbearded John,
This veteran in green years, this sprout, this Woodvil
(With dreadless ease guiding a fire-hot steed,
Which seem'd to scorn the manage of a boy),
Prick forth with such a *mirth* into the field,
To mingle rivalry and acts of war
Even with the sinewy masters of the art.
You would have thought the work of blood had been
A play-game merely, and the rabid Mars
Had put his harmful hostile nature off
To instruct raw youth in images of war,
And practice of the unedged players' foils.
The rough fanatic and blood-practised soldiery
Seeing such hope and virtue in the boy,
Disclosed their ranks to let him pass unhurt,
Checking their swords' uncivil injuries,
As loth to mar that curious workmanship
Of Valour's beauty portray'd in his face."

Lloyd objects to "portray'd in his face," do you? I like the line.

I shall clap this in somewhere. I think there is a spirit through the lines; perhaps the 7th, 8th, and 9th owe their origin to Shakspeare, though no image is borrowed.

He says in *Henry the Fourth*—

"This infant Hotspur,
Mars in swathing clothes."

But pray did Lord Falkland die before Worcester fight? In that case I must make bold to unclify some other nobleman.

Kind love and respects to Edith.

C. LAMB.

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LETTER XLV.]

March 15, 1799.

Dear Southey—I have received your little volume, for which I thank you, though I do not entirely approve of this sort of intercourse, where the presents are all one side. I have read the last Eclogue again with great pleasure. It hath gained considerably by abridgment, and now I think it wants nothing but enlargement. You will call this one of tyrant Procrustes's criticisms, to cut and pull so to his own standard ; but the old lady is so great a favourite with me, I want to hear more of her ; and of "Joanna" you have given us still less. But the picture of the rustics leaning over the bridge, and the old lady travelling abroad on summer evening to see her garden watered, are images so new and true, that I decidedly prefer this "Ruin'd Cottage" to any poem in the book. Indeed I think it the only one that will bear comparison with your "Hymn to the Penates," in a former volume.

I compare dissimilar things, as one would a rose and a star, for the pleasure they give us, or as a child soon learns to choose between a cake and a rattle ; for dissimilars have mostly some points of comparison.

The next best poem, I think, is the first Eclogue ; 'tis very complete, and abounding in little pictures and realities. The remainder Eclogues, excepting only the "Funeral," I do not greatly admire. I miss *one*, which had at

TO SOUTHEY

least as good a title to publication as the "Witch," or the "Sailor's Mother." You call'd it the "Last of the Family." The "Old Woman of Berkeley" comes next; in some humours I would give it the preference above any. But who the devil is Matthew of Westminster? You are as familiar with these antiquated monastics, as Swedenborg, or, as his followers affect to call him, the Baron, with his invisibles. But you have raised a very comic effect out of the true narrative of Matthew of Westminster. 'Tis surprising with how little addition you have been able to convert, with so little alteration, his incidents, meant for terror, into circumstances and food for the spleen. The Parody is *not* so successful; it has one famous line, indeed, which conveys the finest death-bed image I ever met with:—

"The doctor whisper'd the nurse, and the surgeon knew what he said."

But the offering the bribe three times bears not the slightest analogy or proportion to the fiendish noises three times heard! In "Jaspar," the circumstance of the great light is very affecting. But I had heard you mention it before. The "Rose" is the only insipid piece in the volume; it hath neither thorns nor sweetness; and, besides, sets all chronology and probability at defiance.

"Cousin Margaret," you know, I like. The allusions to the *Pilgrim's Progress* are particularly happy, and harmonise tacitly and delicately with

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old cousins and aunts. To familiar faces we do associate familiar scenes and accustomed objects : but what hath Apollidon and his sea-nymphs to do in these affairs? Apollyon I could have borne, though he stands for the devil ; but who is Apollidon? I think you are too apt to conclude faintly, with some cold moral, as in the end of the poem called "The Victory"—

"Be thou her comforter, who art the widow's friend" ;

a single commonplace line of comfort, which bears no proportion in weight or number to the many lines which describe suffering. This is to convert religion into mediocre feelings, which should burn, and glow, and tremble. A moral should be wrought into the body and soul, the matter and tendency of a poem, not tagged to the end, like a "God send the good ship into harbour," at the conclusion of our bills of lading. The finishing of the "Sailor" is also imperfect. Any dissenting minister may say and do as much.

These remarks, I know, are crude and unwrought, but I do not lay much claim to accurate thinking. I never judge system-wise of things, but fasten upon particulars. After all, there is a great deal in the book that I must, for time, leave *unmentioned*, to deserve my thanks for its own sake, as well as for the friendly remembrances implied in the gift. I again return you my thanks.

Pray present my love to Edith. C. L.

TO SOUTHEY

LETTER XLVI.]

March 20, 1799.

I am hugely pleased with your "Spider," "your old freemason," as you call him. The first three stanzas are delicious; they seem to me a compound of Burns and Old Quarles, the kind of home-strokes, where more is felt than strikes the ear; a terseness, a jocular pathos, which makes one feel in laughter. The measure, too, is novel and pleasing. I could almost wonder Robert Burns in his lifetime never stumbled upon it. The fourth stanza is less striking, as being less original. The fifth falls off. It has no felicity of phrase, no old-fashioned phrase or feeling.

"Young hopes, and love's delightful dreams,"

savour neither of Burns nor Quarles; they seem more like shreds of many a modern sentimental sonnet. The last stanza hath nothing striking in it, if I except the two concluding lines, which are Burns all over. I wish, if you concur with me, these things could be looked to. I am sure this is a kind of writing, which comes tenfold better recommended to the heart, comes there more like a neighbour or familiar, than thousands of Hamnells, and Zillahs, and Madelons. I beg you will send me the "Holly Tree," if it at all resemble this, for it must please me. I have never seen it. I love this sort of poems, that open a new intercourse with the most despised

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of the animal and insect race. I think this vein may be further opened. Peter Pindar hath very prettily apostrophised a fly; Burns hath his mouse and his louse; Coleridge less successfully hath made overtures of intimacy to a jackass, therein only following, at unressembling distance, Sterne, and greater Cervantes. Besides these, I know of no other examples of breaking down the partition between us and our "poor earth-born companions." It is sometimes revolting to be put in a track of feeling by other people, not one's own immediate thoughts, else I would persuade you, if I could (I am in earnest), to commence a series of these animals' poems, which might have a tendency to rescue some poor creatures from the antipathy of mankind. Some thoughts came across me: for instance—to a rat, to a toad, to a cockchafer, to a mole. People bake moles alive by a slow oven fire to cure consumption. Rats are, indeed, the most despised and contemptible parts of God's earth. I killed a rat the other day by punching him to pieces, and feel a weight of blood upon me to this hour. Toads you know are made to fly, and tumble down and crush all to pieces. Cockchafers are old sport. Then again to a worm, with an apostrophe to anglers, those patient tyrants, meek inflictors of pangs intolerable, cool devils; to an owl; to all snakes, with an apology for their poison; to a cat in boots or bladders. Your own fancy, if it takes a fancy

TO SOUTHEY

to these hints, will suggest many more. A series of such poems, suppose them accompanied with plates descriptive of animal torments, cooks roasting lobsters, fishmongers crimping skates, etc. etc., would take excessively. I will willingly enter into a partnership in the plan with you : I think my heart and soul would go with it too—at least, give it a thought. My plan is but this minute come into my head ; but it strikes me instantaneously as something new, good, and useful, full of pleasure, and full of moral. If old Quarles and Wither could live again, we would invite them into our firm. Burns hath done his part.

Poor Sam Le Grice ! I am afraid the world, and the camp, and the university, have spoilt him among them. 'Tis certain he had at one time a strong capacity of turning out something better. I knew him, and that not long since, when he had a most warm heart. I am ashamed of the indifference I have sometimes felt towards him. I think the devil is in one's heart. I am under obligations to that man for the warmest friendship, and heartiest sympathy exprest both by word and deed and tears for me, when I was in my greatest distress. But I have forgot that ! as, I fear, he has nigh forgot the awful scenes which were before his eyes when he served the office of a comforter to me. No service was too mean or troublesome for him to perform. I can't think what but the devil,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

“that old spider,” could have suck’d my heart so dry of its sense of all gratitude. If he does come in your way, Southey, fail not to tell him that I retain a most affectionate remembrance of his old friendliness, and an earnest wish to resume our intercourse. In this I am serious. I cannot recommend him to your society, because I am afraid whether he be quite worthy of it ; but I have no right to dismiss him from *my* regard. He was at one time, and in the worst of times, my own familiar friend, and great comfort to me then. I have known him to play at cards with my father, meal-times excepted, literally all day long, in long days too, to save me from being teased by the old man, when I was not able to bear it.

God bless him for it, and God bless you,
Southey. C. L.

LETTER XLVII.]

April 20, 1799.

The following is a second extract from my tragedy—*that is to be*. ’Tis narrated by an old Steward to Margaret, orphan ward of Sir Walter Woodvil. . . . This and the Dying Lover I gave you are the only extracts I can give without mutilation. . . . I expect you to like the old woman’s curse :—

OLD STEWARD. One summer night, Sir Walter, as it
chanced,
Was pacing to and fro in the avenue
That westward fronts our house,

TO SOUTHEY

Among those aged oaks, said to have been planted
Three hundred years ago
By a neighbouring Prior of the Woodvil name, etc.

This is the extract I bragged of as superior
to that I sent you from Marlow : perhaps you
will smile. But I should like your remarks on
the above, as you are deeper witch-read than I.

Yours ever,

C. LAMB.

*Rob. Southey, Esq.,
Mr. Cottle's, Bookseller,
High Street, Bristol.*

LETTER XLVIII.]

May 20, 1799.

Dear Southey—I thank you heartily for your intended presents, but do by no means see the necessity you are under of burthening yourself thereby. You have read old Wither's Superseedeas to small purpose. You object to my pauses being at the end of my lines ; I do not know any great difficulty I should find in diversifying or changing my blank verse ; but I go upon the model of Shakspeare in my Play, and endeavour after a colloquial ease and spirit, something like him. I could as easily imitate Milton's versification, but my ear and feeling would reject it, or any approaches to it, in the *drama*. I do not know whether to be glad or sorry that witches have been detected aforesimes in the shutting up of wombs. I certainly invented that conceit, and its coincidence with

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

fact is accidental, for I never heard it. I have not seen those verses on Colonel Despard: I do not read any newspapers. Are they short to copy without much trouble? I should like to see them.

I just send you a few rhymes from my play, the only rhymes in it. A forest liver gives an account of his amusements:—

What sports have you in the forest?
Not many,—some few,—as thus,
To see the sun to bed, to see him rise,
Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes,
Bursting the lazy bands of sleep that bound him;
With all his fires and travelling glories round him; etc.

I love to anticipate charges of unoriginality: the first line is almost Shakspeare's:—

“To have my love to bed and to arise.”
A Midsummer Night's Dream.

I think there is a sweetness in the versification not unlike some rhymes in that exquisite play, and the last line but three is yours:

“An eye
That met the gaze, or turn'd it knew not why.”
Rosamund's Epistle.

I shall anticipate all my play, and have nothing to show you. An idea for Leviathan: Commentators on Job have been puzzled to find out a meaning for Leviathan. 'Tis a whale, say some; a crocodile, say others. In my simple

TO ROBERT LLOYD

conjecture, Leviathan is neither more nor less than the Lord Mayor of London for the time being.

Rosamund sells well in London, malgré the non-reviewal of it. I sincerely wish you better health, and better health to Edith. Kind remembrances to her.

C. LAMB.

My sister Mary was never in better health or spirits than now.

TO ROBERT LLOYD

LETTER XLIX.]

September 1799.

My dear Robert—I suppose by this time you have returned from Worcester with Uncle Nehemiah. You neglected to inform me whether Charles is yet at Birm. I have heard here that he is returned to Cambridge. Give him a gentle tap on the shoulder to remind him how truly acceptable a letter from him would be. I have nothing to write about.

Thomson remains with me. He is perpetually getting into mental vagaries. He is in LOVE! and tosses and tumbles about in his bed like a man in a barrel of spikes. He is more sociable, but I am heartily sick of his domesticating with me; he wants so many sympathies of mine, and I want his, that we are daily declining

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

into *civility*. I shall be truly glad when he is gone. I find 'tis a dangerous experiment to grow too familiar. Some natures cannot bear it without converting into indifference. I know but one Being that I could ever consent to live perpetually with, and that is Robert. But Robert must go whither prudence and paternal regulations indicate a way. I shall not soon forget you—do not fear that—nor grow cool towards Robert. My not writing is no proof of these disloyalties. Perhaps I am unwell, or vexed, or spleen'd, or something, when I should otherwise write.

Assure Charles of my unalterable affection, and present my warmest wishes for his and Sophia's happiness. How goes on Priscilla? I am much pleased with his Poems in the Anthology—One in Particular. The other is a kind and no doubt just tribute to Robert and Olivia, but I incline to opinion that these domestic addresses should not always be made public. I have, I know, more than once exposed my own secretest feelings of that nature, but I am sorry that I did. Nine out of ten readers laugh at them. When a man dies leaving the name of a great author behind him, any unpublished relicks which let one into his domestic retirements are greedily gathered up, which in his lifetime, and before his fame had ripened, would by many be considered as impertinent. But if Robert and his sister were

TO SOUTHEY

gratify'd with seeing their brother's heart in Print, let the rest of the world go hang. They may prefer the remaining trumpery of the Anthology. All I mean to say is, I think I perceive an indelicacy in thus exposing one's virtuous feelings to criticism. But of delicacy Charles is at least as true a judge as myself.

Pray request him to let me somehow have a sight of his novel. I declined offering it here for sale, for good reasons as I thought—being unknown to Booksellers, and not made for making bargains ; but for that reason I am not to be punished with not seeing the book.

I shall count it a kindness if Chas. will send me the manuscript, which shall certainly be returned. [The remainder of this letter has been torn off.]

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

LETTER L.]

October 31, 1799.

Dear Southey—I have but just got your letter, being returned from Herts, where I have passed a few red-letter days with much pleasure. I would describe the county to you, as you have done by Devonshire ; but alas ! I am a poor pen at that same. I could tell you of an old house with a tapestry bedroom, the “Judgment of Solomon” composing one panel, and

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

“Actæon spying Diana naked” the other. I could tell of an old marble hall, with Hogarth’s prints, and the Roman Cæsars in marble hung round. I could tell of a *wilderness*, and of a village church, and where the bones of my honoured grandam lie; but there are feelings which refuse to be translated, sulky aborigines, which will not be naturalised in another soil. Of this nature are old family faces, and scenes of infancy.

I have given your address, and the books you want, to the Arches; they will send them as soon as they can get them, but they do not seem quite familiar to their names. I have seen Gebor! Gebor aptly so denominated from Geborish, *quasi* Gibberish. But Gebor hath some lucid intervals. I remember darkly one beautiful simile veiled in uncouth phrases about the youngest daughter of the Ark. I shall have nothing to communicate, I fear, to the Anthology. You shall have some fragments of my play, if you desire them; but I think I would rather print it whole. Have you seen it, or shall I lend you a copy? I want your opinion of it.

I must get to business; so farewell. My kind remembrances to Edith. C. LAMB.

TO MANNING

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LI.]

December 28, 1799.

Dear Manning—Having suspended my correspondence a decent interval, as knowing that even good things may be taken to satiety, a wish cannot but recur to learn whether you be still well and happy. Do all things continue in the state I left them in Cambridge?

Do your night parties still flourish? and do you continue to bewilder your company with your thousand faces, running down through all the keys of idiotism (like Lloyd over his perpetual harpsichord), from the smile and the glimmer of half-sense and quarter-sense, to the grin and hanging lip of Betty Foy's own Johnny? And does the face-dissolving curfew sound at twelve? How unlike the great originals were your petty terrors in the postscript! not fearful enough to make a fairy shudder, or a Lilliputian fine lady, eight months full of child, miscarry. Yet one of them, which had more beast than the rest, I thought faintly resembled *one* of your brutifications. But, seriously, I long to see your own honest Manning-face again. I did not mean a pun,—your *man's* face, you will be apt to say, I know your wicked will to pun. I cannot now write to Lloyd and you too; so you must convey as much interesting intelligence as this may contain, or be thought to contain,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

to him and Sophia, with my dearest love and remembrances.

By the by, I think you and Sophia both incorrect with regard to the *title* of the *play*. Allowing your objection (which is not necessary, as pride may be, and is in real life often, cured by misfortunes not directly originating from its own acts, as Jeremy Taylor will tell you a naughty desire is sometimes sent to cure it; I know you read these *practical divines*)—but allowing your objection, does not the betraying of his father's secret directly spring from pride?—from the pride of wine, and a full heart, and a proud over-stepping of the ordinary rules of morality, and contempt of the prejudices of mankind, which are not to bind superior souls—“as *trust* in the *matter* of *secrets* all *ties* of *blood*, etc. etc., keeping of *promises*, the feeble mind's religion, binding our *morning knowledge* to the performance of what *last night's ignorance* spake”—does he not prate, that “*Great Spirits*” must do more than die for their friend? Does not the pride of wine incite him to display some evidence of friendship, which its own irregularity shall make great? This I know, that I meant his punishment not alone to be a cure for his daily and habitual *pride*, but the direct consequence and appropriate punishment of a particular act of pride.

If you do not understand it so, it is my fault in not explaining my meaning.

TO MANNING

I have not seen Coleridge since, and scarcely expect to see him,—perhaps he has been at Cambridge.

Need I turn over to blot a fresh clean half-sheet, merely to say, what I hope you are sure of without my repeating it, that I would have you consider me, dear Manning,

Your sincere friend,

C. LAMB.

LETTER LII.]

December 1799.

Dear Manning—The particular kindness, even up to a degree of attachment, which I have experienced from you, seems to claim some distinct acknowledgment on my part. I could not content myself with a bare remembrance to you, conveyed in some letter to Lloyd.

Will it be agreeable to you, if I occasionally recruit your memory of me, which must else soon fade, if you consider the brief intercourse we have had. I am not likely to prove a troublesome correspondent. My scribbling days are past. I shall have no sentiments to communicate, but as they spring up from some living and worthy occasion.

I look forward with great pleasure to the performance of your promise, that we should meet in London early in the ensuing year. The century must needs commence auspiciously for

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

me, that brings with it Manning's friendship, as an earnest of its after gifts.

I should have written before, but for a troublesome inflammation in one of my eyes, brought on by night travelling with the coach windows sometimes up.

What more I have to say shall be reserved for a letter to Lloyd. I must not prove tedious to you in my first outset, lest I should affright you by my ill-judged loquacity.

I am, yours most sincerely, C. LAMB.

CHAPTER II

1800—1809

LETTERS TO COLERIDGE, MANNING, AND OTHERS

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LIII.]

January 2, 1800.

Dear Coleridge—Now I write, I cannot miss this opportunity of acknowledging the obligations myself, and the readers in general of that luminous paper, the *Morning Post*, are under to you for the very novel and exquisite manner in which you combined political with grammatical science in your yesterday's dissertation on Mr. Wyndham's unhappy composition. It must have been the death-blow to that ministry. I expect Pitt and Grenville to resign. More especially the delicate and Cottrellian grace with which you officiated, with a ferula for a white wand, as gentleman usher to the word "also," which it seems did not know its place.

I expect Manning of Cambridge in town

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

to-night. Will you fulfil your promise of meeting him at my house? He is a man of a thousand. Give me a line to say what day, whether Saturday, Sunday, Monday, etc., and if Sara and the Philosopher can come. I am afraid if I did not at intervals call upon you, I should *never see you*. But I forget, the affairs of the nation engross your time and your mind.

Farewell.

C. L.

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LIV.]

February 13, 1800.

Dear Manning—Olivia is a good girl, and if you turn to my letter you will find that this very plea you set up to vindicate Lloyd, I had made use of as a reason why he should never have employed Olivia to make a copy of such a letter!—a letter I could not have sent to my Enemy's B——, if she had thought proper to seek me in the way of marriage. But you see it in one view, I in another. Rest you merry in your opinion! Opinion is a species of property; and though I am always desirous to share with my friend to a certain extent, I shall ever like to keep some tenets, and some property, properly my own. Some day, Manning, when we meet, substituting Corydon and fair Amaryllis for Charles Lloyd and Mary Hayes, we will discuss together this question of moral feeling, "In

TO MANNING

what cases, and how far, sincerity is a virtue ? ” I do not mean Truth, a good Olivia-like creature, God bless her, who, meaning no offence, is always ready to give an answer when she is asked why she did so and so ; but a certain forward-talking half-brother of hers, Sincerity, that amphibious gentleman, who is so ready to perk up his obnoxious sentiments unasked into your notice, as Midas would his ears into your face, uncalled for. But I despair of doing anything by a letter in the way of explaining or coming to explanations. A good wish, or a pun, or a piece of secret history, may be well enough that way conveyed ; nay, it has been known, that intelligence of a turkey hath been conveyed by that medium, without much ambiguity. Godwin I am a good deal pleased with. He is a very well-behaved, decent man ; nothing very brilliant about him or imposing, as you may suppose ; quite another guess sort of gentleman from what your anti-jacobin Christians imagine him. I was well pleased to find he has neither horns nor claws ; quite a tame creature, I assure you : a middle-sized man, both in stature and in understanding ; whereas, from his noisy fame, you would expect to find a Briareus Centimanus, or a Tityus tall enough to pull Jupiter from his heavens.

I begin to think you atheists not quite so tall a species ! Coleridge inquires after you pretty often. I wish to be the Pandar to bring you

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

together again once before I die. When we die, you and I must part ; the sheep, you know, take the right-hand sign-post, and the goats the left. Stript of its allegory, you must know the sheep are—I, the Apostles, and the martyrs, and the Popes, and Bishop Taylor, and Bishop Horsley, and Coleridge, etc., etc. The goats are the atheists, and adulterers, and fornicators, and dumb dogs, and Godwin, and M——g, and that Thyestæan crew ! Egad, how my saintship sickens at the idea ! You shall have my play and the Falstaff's Letters in a day or two. I will write to Ll[oyd] by this day's Post.

Pray, is it a part of your sincerity to show my letters to Lloyd ? for, really, gentlemen ought to explain their virtues upon a first acquaintance, to prevent mistakes.

God bless you, Manning. Take my trifling *as trifling* ; and believe me, seriously and deeply,
Your well-wisher and friend,

C. L.

LETTER LV.]

March 1, 1800.

I hope by this time you are prepared to say, the "Falstaff's letters" are a bundle of the sharpest, queerest, profoundest humours, of any these juice-drained latter times have spawned. I should have advertised you, that the meaning is frequently hard to be got at ; and so are the

TO MANNING

future guineas, that now lie ripening and aurifying in the womb of some undiscovered Potosi ; but dig, dig, dig, dig, Manning ! I set to, with an unconquerable propulsion to write, with a lamentable want of what to write. My private goings on are orderly as the movements of the spheres, and stale as their music to angels' ears. Public affairs—except as they touch upon me, and so turn into private,—I cannot whip up my mind to feel any interest in. I grieve, indeed, that War, and Nature, and Mr. Pitt, that hangs up in Lloyd's best parlour, should have conspired to call up three necessities, simple commoners as our fathers knew them, into the upper house of luxuries ; bread, and beer, and coals, Manning. But as to France and Frenchmen, and the Abbé Sièyes and his constitutions, I cannot make these present times present to me. I read histories of the past, and I live in them ; although, to abstract senses, they are far less momentous than the noises which keep Europe awake. I am reading *Burnet's History of his own Times*. Did you ever read that garrulous, pleasant history ? He tells his story like an old man past political service, bragging to his sons on winter evenings of the part he took in public transactions, when his "old cap was new." Full of scandal, which all true history is. No palliatives ; but all the stark wickedness, that actually gives the *momentum* to national actors. Quite the prattle of age, and out-lived importance. Truth and sincerity staring

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

out upon you perpetually in *alto rilievo*. Himself a party man—he makes you a party man. None of the cursed philosophical Humeian indifference, so cold, and unnatural, and inhuman ! None of the cursed Gibbonian fine writing, so fine and composite ! None of Dr. Robertson's periods with three members. None of Mr. Roscoe's sage remarks, all so apposite, and coming in so clever, lest the reader should have had the trouble of drawing an inference. Burnet's good old prattle I can bring present to my mind : I can make the revolution present to me : the French revolution, by a converse perversity in my nature, I fling as far *from* me. To quit this tiresome subject, and to relieve you from two or three dismal yawns, which I hear in spirit, I here conclude my more than commonly obtuse letter ; dull, up to the dulness of a Dutch commentator on Shakspeare.

My love to Lloyd and to Sophia. C. L.

LETTER LVI.]

March 17, 1800.

Dear Manning—I am living in a continuous feast. Coleridge has been with me now for nigh three weeks, and the more I see of him in the quotidian undress and relaxation of his mind, the more cause I see to love him, and believe him a *very good man*, and all those foolish impressions to the contrary fly off like morning slumbers. He is engaged in translations, which I hope will

TO MANNING

keep him this month to come. He is uncommonly kind and friendly to me. He ferrets me day and night to *do something*. He tends me, amidst all his own worrying and heart-oppressing occupations, as a gardener tends his young *tulip*. Marry come up ; what a pretty similitude, and how like your humble servant ! He has lugged me to the brink of engaging to a newspaper, and has suggested to me, for a first plan, the forgery of a supposed manuscript of Burton, the anatomist of melancholy. I have even written the introductory letter ; and if I can pick up a few guineas this way, I feel they will be most *refreshing*, bread being so dear. If I go on with it, I will apprise you of it, as you may like to see my things ! and the *tulip*, of all flowers, loves to be admired most.

Pray pardon me, if my letters do not come very thick. I am so taken up with one thing or other, that I cannot pick out (I will not say time, but) fitting times to write to you. My dear love to Lloyd and Sophia, and pray split this thin letter into three parts, and present them with the *two biggest* in my name.

They are my oldest friends ; but, ever the new friend driveth out the old, as the ballad sings ! God bless you all three ! I would hear from Lloyd if I could.

Flour has just fallen nine shillings a sack : we shall be all too rich.

Tell Charles I have seen his mamma, and

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

have almost fallen in love with *her*, since I mayn't with Olivia. She is so fine and graceful, a complete matron-lady-quaker. She has given me two little books. Olivia grows a charming girl—full of feeling, and thinner than she was ; but I have not time to fall in love.

Mary presents her *general compliments*. She keeps in fine health.

Huzza boys ! and down with the Atheists !

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LVII.]

May 12, 1800.

My dear Coleridge—I don't know why I write, except from the propensity which misery has to tell her griefs. Hetty died on Friday night, about eleven o'clock, after eight days' illness. Mary, in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, is fallen ill again, and I was obliged to remove her yesterday. I am left alone in a house with nothing but Hetty's dead body to keep me company. To-morrow I bury her, and then I shall be quite alone, with nothing but a cat, to remind me that the house has been full of living beings like myself. My heart is quite sunk, and I don't know where to look for relief. Mary will get better again, but her constantly being liable to such relapses is dreadful ; nor is it the least of our evils that her case and all our story is so well known around us. We are in a

TO MANNING

manner *marked*. Excuse my troubling you, but I have nobody by me to speak to me. I slept out last night, not being able to endure the change and the stillness ; but I did not sleep well, and I must come back to my own bed. I am going to try and get a friend to come and be with me to-morrow. I am completely shipwrecked. My head is quite bad. I almost wish that Mary were dead. God bless you ! Love to Sara and Hartley. C. LAMB.

Monday.

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LVIII.]

May 17, 1800.

Dear Manning—I am quite out of spirits, and feel as if I should never recover them. But why should not this pass away ? I am foolish, but judge of me by my situation. Our servant is dead, and my sister is ill—so ill as to make a removal to a place of confinement absolutely necessary. I have been left *alone* in a house where but ten days since living beings were, and noises of life were heard. I have made the experiment and find I cannot bear it any longer. Last night I went to sleep at White's, with whom I am to be until I can find a settlement. I have given up my house, and must look out for lodgings. I expect Mary will get better before many weeks are gone,—but at present I

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

feel my daily and hourly prop has fallen from me. I totter and stagger with weakness, for nobody can supply her place to me. White has *all kindness*, but not *sympathy*. R. Lloyd, my only correspondent, you except, is a good Being, but a weak one. I know not where to look but to you. If you will suffer me to weary your shoulders with part of my Burthen, I shall write again to let you know how I go on. Meantime a letter from you would be a considerable relief to me.—Believe me, yours most sincerely,

C. L.

LETTER LIX.]

[Before *June*] 1800.

Dear Manning—I feel myself unable to thank you sufficiently for your kind letter. It was doubly acceptable to me, both for the choice poetry and the kind honest prose which it contained. It was just such a letter as I should have expected from Manning.

I am in much better spirits than when I wrote last. I have had a very eligible offer to lodge with a friend in town. He will have rooms to let at Midsummer; by which time I hope my sister will be well enough to join me. It is a great object to me to live in town, where we shall be much more *private*, and to quit a house and a neighbourhood where poor Mary's disorder, so frequently recurring, has made us a sort of marked people. We can be nowhere

TO COLERIDGE

private except in the midst of London. We shall be in a family where we visit very frequently; only my landlord and I have not yet come to a conclusion. He has a partner to consult. I am still on the tremble, for I do not know where we could go into lodgings that would not be, in many respects, highly exceptionable. Only God send Mary well again, and I hope all will be well! The prospect, such as it is, has made me quite happy. I have just time to tell you of it, as I know it will give you pleasure.—Farewell.

C. LAMB.

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LX.]

June 22, 1800.

By some fatality, unusual with me, I have mislaid the list of books which you want. Can you, from memory, easily supply me with another?

I confess to Statius and I detained him wilfully, out of a reverent regard to your style. Statius, they tell me, is turgid. As to that other Latin book, since you know neither its name nor subject, your wants (I crave leave to apprehend) cannot be very urgent. Meanwhile, dream that it is one of the lost Decades of Livy.

Your partiality to me has led you to form an erroneous opinion as to the measure of delight

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

you suppose me to take in obliging. Pray be careful that it spread no further. 'Tis one of those heresies that is very pregnant. Pray rest more satisfied with the portion of learning which you have got, and disturb my peaceful ignorance as little as possible with such sort of commissions.

Did you never observe an appearance well known by the name of the man in the moon? Some scandalous old maids have set on foot a report that it is Endymion.

Your theory about the first awkward step a man makes being the consequence of learning to dance, is not universal. We have known many youths bred up at Christ's, who never learned to dance, yet the world imputes to them no very graceful motions. I remember there was little Hudson, the immortal precentor of St. Paul's, to teach us our quavers; but, to the best of my recollection, there was no master of motions when we were at Christ's.—Farewell, in haste.

C. L.

TO ROBERT LLOYD

LETTER LXI.]

July 2, 1800.

Dear Robert—My mind has been so barren and idle of late, that I have done nothing. I have received many a summons from you, and have repeatedly sat down to write, and broke off

TO ROBERT LLOYD

from despair of sending you anything worthy your acceptance. I have had such a deadness about me. Man delights not me nor woman neither. I impute it in part, or altogether, to the stupefying effect which continued fine weather has upon me. I want some rains, or even snow and intense cold winter nights, to bind me to my habitation, and make me value it as a home—a sacred character which it has not attained with me hitherto. I cannot read or write when the sun shines: I can only walk.

I must tell you that, since I wrote last I have been two days at Oxford, on a visit (long put off) to Gutch's family (my landlord). I was much gratified with the Colleges and Libraries and what else of Oxford I could see in so short a time. In the All Souls' Library is a fine head of Bishop Taylor, which was one great inducement to my Oxford visit. In the Bodleian are many Portraits of illustrious Dead, the only species of painting I value at a farthing. But an indubitable good Portrait of a great man is worth a pilgrimage to go and see. Gutch's family is a very fine one, consisting of well-grown sons and daughters, and all likely and well-favour'd. What is called a Happy family—that is, according to my interpretation, a numerous assemblage of young men and women, all fond of each other to a certain degree, and all happy together, but where the very number forbids any two of them to get close enough to each other to share secrets

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

and *be friends*. That close intercourse can only exist (commonly, I think,) in a family of two or three. I do not envy large families. The fraternal affection by diffusion and multi-participation is ordinarily thin and weak. They don't get near enough to each other.

I expected to have had an account of Sophia's being brought to bed before this time; but I remain in confidence that you will send me the earliest news. I hope it will be happy.

Coleridge is settled at Keswick, so that the probability is that he will be once again united with your Brother. Such men as he and Wordsworth would exclude solitude in the Hebrides or Thule.

Pray have you seen the New Edition of Burns, including his posthumous works? I want very much to get a sight of it, but cannot afford to buy it, my Oxford Journey, though very moderate, having pared away all superfluities.

Will you accept of this short letter, accompanied with professions of deepest regard for you?—Yours unalterably, C. LAMB.

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LXII.]

August 6, 1800.

Dear Coleridge—I have taken to-day, and delivered to L. and Co., *Imprimis*: your books,

TO COLERIDGE

viz., three ponderous German dictionaries, one volume (I can find no more) of German and French ditto, sundry other German books unbound, as you left them, *Percy's Ancient Poetry*, and one volume of *Anderson's Poets*. I specify them, that you may not lose any. *Secundo*: a dressing gown (value, fivepence) in which you used to sit and look like a conjurer, when you were translating *Wallenstein*. A case of two razors, and a shaving-box and strap. This it has cost me a severe struggle to part with. They are in a brown-paper parcel, which also contains sundry papers and poems, sermons, *some few Epic Poems*,—one about Cain and Abel, which came from Poole, etc. etc., and also your tragedy; with one or two small German books, and that drama in which Got-fader performs. *Tertio*: a small oblong box containing *all your letters*, collected from all your waste papers, and which fill the said little box. All other waste papers, which I judged worth sending, are in the paper parcel aforesaid. But you will find *all your letters* in the box by themselves. Thus have I discharged my conscience and my lumber-room of all your property, save and except a folio entitled *Tyrrell's Bibliotheca Politica*, which you used to learn your politics out of when you wrote for the *Post*, *mutatis mutandis*, i.e., applying past inferences to modern *data*. I retain that, because I am sensible I am very deficient in the politics myself; and I have torn up (don't be

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

angry, waste paper has risen forty per cent, and I can't afford to buy it) all *Buonaparte's Letters*, *Arthur Young's Treatise on Corn*, and one or two more light-armed infantry, which I thought better suited the flippancy of London discussion than the dignity of Keswick thinking. Mary says you will be in a passion about them, when you come to miss them; but you must study philosophy. Read *Albertus Magnus de Chartis Amissis* five times over after phlebotomising,—'tis Burton's recipe,—and then be angry with an absent friend if you can.

Sara is obscure. Am I to understand by her letter, that she sends a *kiss* to Eliza Buckingham? Pray tell your wife that a note of interrogation on the superscription of a letter is highly ungrammatical: she proposes writing my name *Lambe*? Lamb is quite enough. I have had the *Anthology*, and like only one thing in it, *Lewti*; but of that the last stanza is detestable, the rest most exquisite: the epithet *enviable* would dash the finest poem. For God's sake (I never was more serious) don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five years ago when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines, to feed upon such epithets; but, besides that, the meaning of "gentle" is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited; the very quality of gentle-

TO COLERIDGE

ness is abhorrent to such vile trumpeting. My *sentiment* is long since vanished. I hope my *virtues* have done *sucking*. I can scarce think but you meant it in joke. I hope you did, for I should be ashamed to believe that you could think to gratify me by such praise, fit only to be a cordial to some green-sick sonneteer.

I have hit off the following in imitation of old English poetry, which, I imagine, I am a dab at. The measure is unmeasurable; but it most resembles that beautiful ballad, the "Old and Young Courtier"; and in its feature of taking the extremes of two situations for just parallel, it resembles the old poetry certainly. If I could but stretch out the circumstances to twelve more verses, *i.e.*, if I had as much genius as the writer of that old song, I think it would be excellent. It was to follow an imitation of Burton in prose, which you have not seen. But fate "and wisest Stewart" say No.

I can send you 200 pens and six quires of paper *immediately*, if they will answer the carriage by coach. It would be foolish to pack 'em up *cum multis libris et cæteris*; they would all spoil. I only wait your commands to coach them. I would pay five-and-forty thousand carriages to read W.'s tragedy, of which I have heard so much and seen so little—only what I saw at Stowey. Pray give me an order in writing on Longman for *Lyrical Ballads*. I have the first volume, and, truth to tell, six shillings is a broad

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

shot. I cram all I can in, to save a multiplying of letters,—those pretty comets with swinging tails.

I'll just crowd in, God bless you !

Wednesday Night.

C. LAMB.

To THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LXIII.]

August 1800.

Dear Manning—I am going to ask a favour of you, and am at a loss how to do it in the most delicate manner. For this purpose I have been looking into Pliny's Letters, who is noted to have had the best grace in begging of all the ancients (I read him in the elegant translation of Mr. Melmoth), but not finding any case there exactly similar with mine, I am constrained to beg in my own barbarian way. To come to the point then, and hasten into the middle of things: have you a copy of your Algebra to give away? I do not ask it for myself; I have too much reverence for the Black Arts ever to approach thy circle, illustrious Trismegist! But that worthy man, and excellent poet, George Dyer, made me a visit yesternight, on purpose to borrow one; supposing, rationally enough, I must say, that you had made me a present of one before this; the omission of which I take to have proceeded only from negligence; but

TO MANNING

it is a fault. I could lend him no assistance. You must know he is just now diverted from the pursuit of the BELL LETTERS by a paradox, which he has heard his friend Frend (that learned mathematician) maintain, that the negative quantities of mathematicians were *meræ nugæ*, things scarcely *in rerum naturâ*, and smacking too much of mystery for gentlemen of Mr. Frend's clear Unitarian capacity. However, the dispute once set a-going, has seized violently on George's pericranick; and it is necessary for his health that he should speedily come to a resolution of his doubts. He goes about teasing his friends with his new mathematics: he even frantically talks of purchasing Manning's Algebra, which shows him far gone; for, to my knowledge, he has not been master of seven shillings a good time. George's pockets and ——'s brain are two things in nature which do not abhor a vacuum. . . . Now, if you could step in, in this trembling suspense of his reason, and he should find on Saturday morning, lying for him at the Porter's Lodge, Clifford's Inn (his safest address), Manning's Algebra, with a neat manuscript in the blank leaf, running thus "FROM THE AUTHOR," it might save his wits, and restore the unhappy author to those studies of poetry and criticism which are at present suspended, to the infinite regret of the whole literary world. *N.B.*—Dirty backs, smeared leaves, and dogs' ears, will be rather a recommendation than other-

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

wise. *N.B.*—He must have the book as soon as possible, or nothing can withhold him from madly purchasing the book on tick. . . . Then shall we see him sweetly restored to the chair of Longinus—to dictate in smooth and modest phrase the laws of verse ; to prove that Theocritus first introduced the Pastoral, and Virgil and Pope brought it to its perfection ; that Gray and Mason (who always hunt in couples in George's brain) have shown a great deal of poetical fire in their lyric poetry ; that Aristotle's rules are not to be servilely followed, which George has shown to have imposed great shackles upon modern genius. His poems, I find, are to consist of two vols.—reasonable octavo ; and a third book will exclusively contain criticisms, in which he asserts he has gone *pretty deeply* into the laws of blank verse and rhyme—epic poetry, dramatic and pastoral ditto—all which is to come out before Christmas. But, above all, he has *touched* most *deeply* upon the Drama, comparing the English with the modern German stage, their merits and defects. Apprehending that his *studies* (not to mention his *turn*, which I take to be chiefly towards the lyrical poetry) hardly qualified him for these disquisitions, I modestly inquired what plays he had read ? I found by George's reply that he *had* read Shakspeare, but that was a good while since : he calls him a great but irregular genius, which I think to be an original

TO MANNING

and just remark. Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ben Jonson, Shirley, Marlowe, Ford, and the worthies of Dodsley's Collection—he confessed he had read none of them, but professed his *intention* of looking through them all, so as to be able to *touch* upon them in his book. So Shakspeare, Otway, and I believe Rowe, to whom he was naturally directed by Johnson's Lives, and these not read lately, are to stand him in stead of a general knowlege of the subject. God bless his dear absurd head !

By the by, did I not write you a letter with something about an invitation in it? But let that pass ; I suppose it is not agreeable.

N.B.—It would not be amiss if you were to accompany your *present* with a dissertation on negative quantities.

C. L.

LETTER LXIV.]

1800.

George Dyer is an Archimedes, and an Archimagus, and a Tycho Brahe, and a Copernicus ; and thou art the darling of the Nine, and midwife to their wandering babe also ! We take tea with that learned poet and critic on Tuesday night, at half-past five, in his neat library. The repast will be light and Attic, with criticism. If thou couldst contrive to wheel up thy dear carcass on the Monday, and after dining with us on tripe, calves' kidneys, or whatever else the Cornucopia of St. Clare may

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

be willing to pour out on the occasion, might we not adjourn together to the Heathen's—thou with thy Black Back, and I with some innocent volume of the Bell Letters, Shenstone, or the like : it would make him wash his old flannel gown (that has not been washed to my knowledge since it has been *his*—Oh the long time !) with tears of joy. Thou shouldst settle his scruples and unravel his cobwebs, and sponge off the sad stuff that weighs upon his dear wounded piamater. Thou shouldst restore light to his eyes, and him to his friends and the public. Parnassus should shower her civic crowns upon thee for saving the wits of a citizen ! I thought I saw a lucid interval in George the other night ; he broke in upon my studies just at tea-time, and brought with him Dr. Anderson, an old gentleman who ties his breeches' knees with pack-thread, and boasts that he has been disappointed by ministers. The Doctor wanted to see *me* ; for I being a Poet, he thought I might furnish him with a copy of verses to suit his *Agricultural Magazine*. The Doctor, in the course of the conversation, mentioned a poem called the “Epigoniad,” by one Wilkie, an epic poem, in which there is not one tolerable good line all through, but every incident and speech borrowed from Homer. George had been sitting inattentive, seemingly, to what was going on—hatching of negative quantities—when, suddenly, the name of his old friend Homer stung his peri-

TO MANNING

cranicks, and, jumping up, he begged to know where he could meet with Wilkie's works. It was a curious fact, he said, that there should be such an epic poem and he not know of it ; and he *must* get a copy of it, as he was going to touch pretty deeply upon the subject of the Epic—and he was sure there must be some things good in a poem of 8000 lines ! I was pleased with this transient return of his reason and recurrence to his old ways of thinking : it gave me great hopes of a recovery, which nothing but your book can completely insure. Pray come on Monday, if you *can*, and stay your own time. I have a good large room with two beds in it, in the handsomest of which thou shalt repose a-nights, and dream of Spheroides. I hope you will understand by the nonsense of this letter that I am *not* melancholy at the thoughts of thy coming : I thought it necessary to add this, because you love *precision*. Take notice that our stay at Dyer's will not exceed eight o'clock ; after which our pursuits will be our own. But indeed I think a little recreation among the Bell Letters and poetry will do you some service in the interval of severer studies. I hope we shall fully discuss with George Dyer what I have never yet heard done to my satisfaction, the reason of Dr. Johnson's malevolent strictures on the higher species of the Ode.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

LETTER LXV.]

[August 9, 1800.]

Dear Manning—I suppose you have heard of Sophia Lloyd's good fortune, and paid the customary compliments to the parents. Heaven keep the new-born infant from star blasting and moon blasting, from epilepsy, marasmus, and the devil! May he live to see many days, and they good ones; some friends, and they *pretty regular correspondents*! with as much wit and wisdom as will eat their bread and cheese together under a poor roof without quarrelling! as much goodness as will earn heaven. Here I must leave off, my benedictory powers failing me.

And now, when shall I catch a glimpse of your honest face-to-face countenance again?—your fine *dogmatical sceptical* face by punch-light? Oh! one glimpse of the human face, and shake of the human hand, is better than whole reams of this cold, thin correspondence; yea, of more worth than all the letters that have sweated the fingers of sensibility, from Madame Sévigné and Balzac to Sterne and Shenstone.

Coleridge is settled with his wife and the young philosopher at Keswick, with the Wordsworths. They have contrived to spawn a new volume of lyrical ballads, which is to see the light in about a month, and causes no little excitement in the *literary world*. George Dyer too, that good-natured heathen, is more than

TO MANNING

nine months gone with his twin volumes of ode, pastoral, sonnet, elegy, Spenserian, Horatian, Akensidish, and Masonic verse. Clio prosper the birth ! it will be twelve shillings out of somebody's pocket. I find he means to exclude "personal satire," so it appears by his truly original advertisement. Well, God put it into the hearts of the English gentry to come in shoals and subscribe to his poems, for He never put a kinder heart into flesh of man than George Dyer's !

Now farewell, for dinner is at hand. C. L.

LETTER LXVI.]

August 11, 1800.

My dear fellow (*N.B.* mighty familiar of late !), for me to come to Cambridge now is one of heaven's impossibilities. Metaphysicians tell us, even it can work nothing which implies a contradiction. I can explain this by telling you that I am engaged to do double duty (this hot weather !) for a man who has taken advantage of this very weather to go and cool himself in "green retreats" all the month of August.

But for you to come to London instead !—muse upon it, revolve it, cast it about in your mind. I have a bed at your command. You shall drink rum, brandy, gin, aqua-vitæ, usquebaugh, or whiskey a' nights ; and for the after-dinner trick, I have eight bottles of genuine port, which, mathematically divided, gives $1\frac{1}{7}$

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

for every day you stay, provided you stay a week.
Hear John Milton sing,

“Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause.”
Twenty-first Sonnet.

And elsewhere,—

“What neat repast shall feast us, light¹ and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine,² whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touch’d, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air ? ”

Indeed the poets are full of this pleasing
morality,—

“Veni cito, Domine Manning ! ”

Think upon it. Excuse the paper ; it is all I
have. C. LAMB.

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LXVII.]

August 14, 1800.

My head is playing all the tunes in the world,
ringing such peals ! It has just finished the
“Merry Christ Church Bells,” and absolutely is
beginning “Turn again, Whittington,” Buz, buz,
buz, bum, bum, bum, wheeze, wheeze, wheeze,
fen, fen, fen, tinky, tinky, tinky, *cr’annch*. I
shall certainly come to be condemned at last.

¹ We poets generally give *light* dinners.

² No doubt the poet here alludes to port wine at 38s. the dozen.

TO COLERIDGE

I have been drinking too much for two days running. I find my moral sense in the last stage of a consumption, and my religion getting faint. This is disheartening ; but I trust the devil will not overpower me. In the midst of this infernal larum, Conscience is barking and yelping as loud as any of them. I have sat down to read over again your satire upon me in the *Anthology*, and I think I do begin to spy out something like beauty and design in it. I perfectly accede to all your alterations, and only desire that you had cut deeper, when your hand was in.

In sober truth, I cannot see any great truth in the little dialogue called "Blenheim." It is rather novel and pretty, but the thought is very obvious and is but poor prattle, a thing of easy imitation. *Pauper vult videri et est.*

In the next edition of the *Anthology* (which Phœbus avert, and those nine other wandering maids also !) please to blot out "gentle-hearted," and substitute drunken dog, ragged head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question. And for Charles read Tom, or Bob, or Richard for mere delicacy. Hang you, I was beginning to forgive you, and believe in earnest that the lugging in of my proper name was purely unintentional on your part, when looking back for further conviction, stares me in the face, "Charles Lamb of the *India House*." Now I am convinced it was all done in malice,

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

heaped sack-upon-sack, congregated, studied malice. You dog! your 141st page shall not save you. I own I was just ready to acknowledge that there is a something not unlike good poetry in that page, if you had not run into the unintelligible abstraction-fit about the manner of the Deity's making spirits perceive his presence. God, nor created thing alive, can receive any honour from such thin show-box attributes. By the by, where did you pick up that scandalous piece of private history about the angel and the Duchess of Devonshire? If it is a fiction of your own, why truly it was a very modest one *for you*. Now I do affirm, that "Lewti" is a very beautiful poem. I *was* in earnest when I praised it. It describes a silly species of one not the wisest of passions. *Therefore* it cannot deeply affect a disenthralled mind. But such imagery, such novelty, such delicacy, and such versification never got into an *Anthology* before. I am only sorry that the cause of all the passionate complaint is not greater than the trifling circumstance of Lewti being out of temper one day. "Gaulberto" certainly has considerable originality, but sadly wants finishing. It is, as it is, one of the very best in the book. Next to "Lewti" I like the "Raven," which has a good deal of humour. I was pleased to see it again, for you once sent it me, and I have lost the letter which contained it. Now I am on the subject of Anthologies, I must say I am sorry the old

TO COLERIDGE

pastoral way has fallen into disrepute. The gentry which now indite sonnets are certainly the legitimate descendants of the ancient shepherds. The same simpering face of description, the old family face, is visibly continued in the line. Some of their ancestors' labours are yet to be found in Allan Ramsay's and Jacob Tonson's Miscellanies. But miscellanies decaying, and the old pastoral way dying of mere want, their successors (driven from their paternal acres) nowadays settle and lie upon Magazines and Anthologies. This race of men are uncommonly addicted to superstition. Some of them are idolaters, and worship the moon. Others deify qualities, as Love, Friendship, Sensibility ; or bare accidents, as Solitude. Grief and Melancholy have their respective altars and temples among them, as the heathens builded theirs to Mors, Febris, Pallor, etc. They all agree in ascribing a peculiar sanctity to the number 14. One of their own legislators affirmeth, that whatever exceeds that number "encroacheth upon the province of the elegy"—*vice versa*, whatever "cometh short of that number abutteth upon the premises of the epigram." I have been able to discover but few *images* in their temples, which, like the caves of Delphos of old, are famous for giving *echoes*. They impute a religious importance to the letter O, whether because by its roundness it is thought to typify the moon, their principal goddess, or for its analogies to their

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

own labours, all ending where they began, or for whatever other high and mystical reference, I have never been able to discover, but I observe they never begin their invocations to their gods without it, except indeed one insignificant sect among them, who use the Doric A, pronounced like Ah ! broad, instead. These boast to have restored the old Dorian mood.

Now I am on the subject of poetry, I must announce to you, who doubtless in your remote part of the island have not heard tidings of so great a blessing, that George Dyer hath prepared two ponderous volumes full of poetry and criticism. They impend over the town, and are threatened to fall in the Winter. The first volume contains every sort of poetry, except personal satire, which George, in his truly original prospectus, renounceth for ever, whimsically foisting the intension in between the price of his book and the proposed number of subscribers. (If I can, I will get you a copy of his *handbill*). He has tried his *vein* in every species besides—the Spenserian, Thomsonian, Masonic, and Aken-sidish more especially. The second volume is all criticism; wherein he demonstrates to the entire satisfaction of the literary world, in a way that must silence all reply for ever, that the Pastoral was introduced by Theocritus, and polished by Virgil and Pope; that Gray and Mason (who always hunt in couples in George's brain) have a good deal of poetical fire and true

TO MANNING

lyric genius ; that Cowley was ruined by excess of wit (a warning to all moderns) ; that Charles Lloyd, Charles Lamb, and William Wordsworth, in later days, have struck the true chords of poesy. O George, George ! with a head uniformly wrong, and a heart uniformly right, that I had power and might equal to my wishes : then I would call the gentry of thy native island, and they should come in troops, flocking at the sound of thy prospectus trumpet, and crowding who shall be first to stand in thy list of subscribers ! I can only put twelve shillings into thy pocket (which, I will answer for them, will not stick there long), out of a pocket almost as bare as thine. Is it not a pity so much fine writing should be erased ? But, to tell the truth, I began to scent that I was getting into that sort of style which Longinus and Dionysius Halicarnassus aptly call “ the affected.” C. L.

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LXVIII.]

August 22, 1800.

Dear Manning—You needed not imagine any apology necessary. Your fine hare and fine birds (which are just now dangling by our kitchen blaze) discourse most eloquent music in your justification. You just nicked my palate. For with all due decorum and leave may it be

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

spoken, my worship hath taken physic to-day, and being low and puling, requireth to be pampered. Foh! how beautiful and strong those buttered onions come to my nose! For you know we extract a divine spirit of gravy from those materials, which, duly compounded with a consistence of bread and cream (y'clept bread-sauce), each to each giving double grace, do mutually illustrate and set off (as skilful gold foils to rare jewels) your partridge, pheasant, woodcock, snipe, teal, widgeon, and the other lesser daughters of the ark. My friendship, struggling with my carnal and fleshly prudence (which suggests that a bird a man is the proper allotment in such cases), yearneth sometimes to have thee here to pick a wing or so. I question if your Norfolk sauces match our London culinanic.

George Dyer has introduced me to the table of an agreeable old gentleman, Dr. Anderson, who gives hot legs of mutton and grape pies at his sylvan lodge at Isleworth; where, in the middle of a street, he has shot up a wall most preposterously before his small dwelling, which, with the circumstance of his taking several panes of glass out of bed-room windows (for air), causeth his neighbours to speculate strangely on the state of the good man's pericranicks. Plainly, he lives under the reputation of being deranged. George does not mind this circumstance; he rather likes him the better for it. The Doctor, in his pursuits, joins agricultural to poetical

TO MANNING

science, and has set George's brains mad about the old Scotch writers, Barbour, Douglas's *Æneid*, Blind Harry, etc. We returned home in a return postchaise (having dined with the Doctor), and George kept wondering and wondering, for eight or nine turnpike miles, what was the name, and striving to recollect the name, of a poet anterior to Barbour. I begged to know what was remaining of his works. "There is nothing *extant* of his works, Sir ; but by all accounts he seems to have been a fine genius !" This fine genius, without anything to show for it, or any title beyond George's courtesy, without even a name ; and Barbour, and Douglas, and Blind Harry now are the predominant sounds in George's pia mater, and their buzzings exclude politics, criticism, and algebra—the late lords of that illustrious lumber-room. Mark, he has never read any of these books, but is impatient till he reads them *all* at the Doctor's suggestion. Poor Dyer ! his friends should be careful what sparks they let fall into such inflammable matter.

Could I have my will of the heathen, I would lock him up from all access of new ideas ; I would exclude all critics that would not swear me first (upon their Virgil) that they would feed him with nothing but the old, safe, familiar notions and sounds (the rightful aborigines of his brain)—Gray, Akenside, and Mason. In these sounds, reiterated as often as possible, there could be nothing painful, nothing distracting.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

God bless me, here are the birds, smoking hot ! All that is gross and unspiritual in me rises at the sight !

Avaunt friendship, and all memory of absent friends !

C. LAMB.

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LXIX.]

[Early in *August*] 1800.

Dear Coleridge—Soon after I wrote to you last, an offer was made me by Gutch (you must remember him, at Christ's ; you saw him, slightly, one day with Thomson at our house), to come and lodge with him, at his house in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. This was a very comfortable offer to me, the rooms being at a reasonable rent, and including the use of an old servant, besides being infinitely preferable to ordinary lodgings *in our case*, as you must perceive. As Gutch knew all our story and the perpetual liability to a recurrence in my sister's disorder, probably to the end of her life, I certainly think the offer very generous and very friendly. I have got three rooms (including servant) under £34 a year. Here I soon found myself at home ; and here, in six weeks after, Mary was well enough to join me. So we are once more settled. I am afraid we are not placed out of the reach of future interruptions. But I am determined to

TO COLERIDGE

take what snatches of pleasure we can between the acts of our distressful drama. . . . I have passed two days at Oxford, on a visit which I have long put off, to Gutch's family. The sight of the Bodleian Library, and, above all, a fine bust of Bishop Taylor, at All Souls', were particularly gratifying to me. Unluckily, it was not a family where I could take Mary with me, and I am afraid there is something of dishonesty in any pleasures I take without *her*. She never goes anywhere. I do not know what I can add to this letter. I hope you are better by this time ; and I desire to be affectionately remembered to Sara and Hartley.

I expected before this to have had tidings of another little philosopher. Lloyd's wife is on the point of favouring the world.

Have you seen the new edition of Burns ? his posthumous works and letters ? I have only been able to procure the first volume, which contains his life—very confusedly and badly written, and interspersed with dull pathological and *medical* discussions. It is written by a Dr. Currie. Do you know the well-meaning doctor ? Alas, *ne sutor ultra crepidam* !

I hope to hear again from you very soon. Godwin is gone to Ireland on a visit to Grattan. Before he went I passed much time with him, and he has showed me particular attentions : N.B. A thing I much like. Your books are all safe : only I have not thought it necessary to

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

fetch away your last batch, which I understand are at Johnson's, the bookseller, who has got quite as much room, and will take as much care of them as myself; and you can send for them immediately from him.

I wish you would advert to a letter I sent you at Grassmere about *Christabel*, and comply with my request contained therein.

Love to all friends round Skiddaw.

C. LAMB.

To J. M. GUTCH

LETTER LXX.]

[Probably Autumn of 1800.]

Dear Gutch—Anderson is not come home, and I am almost afraid to tell you what has happened, lest it should seem to have happened by my fault in not writing for you home sooner. This morning Henry, the eldest lad, was missing: we supposed he was only gone out on a morning's stroll, and that he would return; but he did not return, and we discovered that he had opened your desk before he went, and I suppose taken all the money he could find, for on diligent search I could find none, and on opening your letter to Anderson, which I thought necessary to get at the key, I learn that you had a good deal of money there. Several people have been here after you to-day, and the boys seem quite frightened and do not know what to do. In particular one gentleman wants to have some

TO COLERIDGE

writings finished by Tuesday. For God's sake, set out by the first coach! Mary has been crying all day about it, and I am now just going to some law-stationer in the neighbourhood that the eldest boy has recommended, to get him to come and be in the house for a day or two to manage. I cannot think what detains Anderson. His sister is quite frightened about him. I am very sorry I did not write yesterday, but Henry persuaded me to wait till he could ascertain when some job must be done for Mr. Foulkes, and as nothing had occurred besides, I did not like to disturb your pleasures. I now see my error, and shall be heartily ashamed to see your—
(At this point the reader of the letter turns over the leaf, and finds)

A BITE!!!

Anderson is come home, and the wheels of thy business are going on as ever!

The boy is honest, and I am thy friend!
And how does the coach-maker's daughter?
Thou art her Phæton, her Gig, and her Sociable.
Commend me to Rob. C. LAMB.

Saturday.

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LXXI.]

August 26, 1800.

How do you like this little epigram? It is not my writing, nor had I any finger in it. If

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

you concur with me in thinking it very elegant and very original, I shall be tempted to name the author to you. I will just hint that it is almost or quite a first attempt.

HELEN

HIGH-BORN Helen, round your dwelling
These twenty years I've paced in vain :
Haughty beauty, thy lover's duty
Hath been to glory in his pain.

High-born Helen, proudly telling
Stories of thy cold disdain ;
I starve, I die, now you comply,
And I no longer can complain.

These twenty years I've lived on tears,
Dwelling for ever on a frown ;
On sighs I've fed, your scorn my bread ;
I perish now you kind are grown.

Can I, who loved my beloved
But for the scorn "was in her eye,"
Can I be moved for my beloved,
When she "returns me sigh for sigh" ?

In stately pride, by my bed-side,
High-born Helen's portrait's hung ;
Deaf to my praise, my mournful lays
Are nightly to the portrait sung.

To that I weep, nor ever sleep,
Complaining all night long to her,
Helen, grown old, no longer cold,
Said, "You to all men I prefer."

TO COLERIDGE

By the by, I have a sort of recollection that somebody, I think *you*, promised me a sight of Wordsworth's Tragedy. I should be very glad of it just now ; for I have got Manning with me, and should like to read it *with him*. But this, I confess, is a refinement. Under any circumstances, alone, in Cold-Bath prison, or in the desert island, just when Prospero and his crew had set off, with Caliban in a cage, to Milan, it would be a treat to me to read that play. Manning has read it, so has Lloyd, and all Lloyd's family ; but I could not get him to betray his trust by giving *me* a sight of it. Lloyd is sadly deficient in some of those virtuous vices. I have just lit upon a most beautiful fiction of Hell punishments by the author of *Hurlothrumbo*, a mad farce. The inventor imagines that in Hell there is a great caldron of hot water, in which a man can scarce hold his finger, and an immense sieve over it, into which the probationary souls are put—

“ And all the little souls
Pop thro' the riddle holes ! ”

George Dyer is the only literary character I am happily acquainted with. The oftener I see him, the more deeply I admire him. He is goodness itself. If I could but calculate the precise date of his death, I would write a novel on purpose to make George the hero. I could hit him off to a hair.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

George brought a Dr. Anderson to see me. The doctor is a very pleasant old man, a great genius for agriculture, one that ties his breeches-knees with pack-thread, and boasts of having had disappointments from ministers. The doctor happened to mention an epic poem by one Wilkie, called the *Epigoniad*, in which he assured us there is not one tolerable line from beginning to end, but that all the characters, incidents, etc., are verbally copied from *Homer*. George, who had been sitting quite inattentive to the Doctor's criticism, no sooner heard the sound of *Homer* strike his pericranicks, than up he gets, and declares he must see that poem immediately: where was it to be had? An epic poem of 8000 lines, and *he* not hear of it! There must be some good things in it, and it was necessary he should see it, for he had touched pretty deeply upon that subject in his criticisms on the Epic. George has touched pretty deeply upon the Lyric, I find; he has also prepared a dissertation on the Drama and the comparison of the English and German theatres. As I rather doubted his competency to do the latter, knowing that his peculiar *turn* lies in the lyric species of composition, I questioned George what English plays he had read. I found that he *had* read Shakspeare (whom he calls an original, but irregular, genius); but it was a good while ago; and he has dipped into Rowe and Otway, I suppose

TO COLERIDGE

having found their names in *Johnson's Lives* at full length ; and upon this slender ground he has undertaken the task. He never seemed even to have heard of Fletcher, Ford, Marlowe, Massinger, and the worthies of Dodsley's collection ; but he is to read all these, to prepare him for bringing out his "Parallel" in the Winter. I find he is also determined to vindicate poetry from the shackles which Aristotle and some others have imposed upon it, which is very good-natured of him, and very necessary just now. Now I am *touching* so *deeply* upon poetry, can I forget that I have just received from Cottle a magnificent copy of his *Guinea Alfred*. Four-and-twenty books to read in the dog-days ! I got as far as the Mad Monk the first day, and fainted. Mr. Cottle's genius strongly points him to the *Pastoral*, but his inclinations divert him perpetually from his calling. He imitates Southey, as Rowe did Shakspeare, with his "Good morrow to ye ; good master Lieutenant." Instead of *a* man, *a* woman, *a* daughter, he constantly writes, one a man, one a woman, one his daughter. Instead of *the* king, *the* hero, he constantly writes, he the king, he the hero ; two flowers of rhetoric, palpably from the "Joan." But Mr. Cottle soars a higher pitch : and when he *is* original, it is in a most original way indeed. His terrific scenes are indefatigable. Serpents, asps, spiders, ghosts, dead bodies, staircases made of nothing, with adders' tongues

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

for bannisters. What a brain he must have ! He puts as many plums in his pudding as my grandmother used to do ;—and then his emerging from Hell's horrors into light, and treading on pure flats of this earth—for twenty-three books together !

C. L.

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LXXII.]

October 5, 1800.

C. L.'s moral sense presents her compliments to Doctor Manning, is very thankful for his medical advice, but is happy to add that her disorder has died of itself.

Dr. Manning, Coleridge has left us, to go into the North, on a visit to Wordsworth. With him have flown all my splendid prospects of engagement with the *Morning Post*, all my visionary guineas, the deceitful wages of unborn scandal. In truth, I wonder you took it up so seriously. All my intention was but to make a little sport with such public and fair game as Mr. Pitt, Mr. Wilberforce, Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Devil, etc.—gentry dipped in Styx all over, whom no paper-javelinlings can touch. To have made free with these cattle, where was the harm ? 'twould have been but giving a polish to lamp-black, not nigrifying a negro primarily. After all, I cannot but regret my involuntary

TO MANNING

virtue. Damn virtue that's thrust upon us ; it behaves itself with such constraint, till conscience opens the window and lets out the goose. I had struck off two imitations of Burton, quite abstracted from any modern allusions, which it was my intent only to lug in from time to time to make 'em popular.

Stuart has got these, with an introductory letter ; but, not hearing from him, I have ceased from my labours, but I write to him to-day to get a final answer. I am afraid they won't do for a paper. Burton is a scarce gentleman, not much known, else I had done 'em pretty well.

I have also hit off a few lines in the name of Burton, being a "Conceit of Diabolic Possession." Burton was a man often assailed by deepest melancholy, and at other times much given to laughing and jesting, as is the way with melancholy men. I will send them to you : they were almost extempore, and no great things ; but you will indulge them. Robert Lloyd is come to town. Priscilla meditates going to see *Pizarro* at Drury Lane to-night (from her uncle's), under cover of coming to dine with me . . . *heu tempora ! heu mores !*—I have barely time to finish, as I expect her and Robin every minute.—Yours as usual. C. L.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

TO SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

LETTER LXXIII.]

October 9, 1800.

I suppose you have heard of the death of Amos Cottle. I paid a solemn visit of condolence to his brother, accompanied by George Dyer, of burlesque memory. I went, trembling to see poor Cottle so immediately upon the event. He was in black; and his younger brother was also in black. Everything wore an aspect suitable to the respect due to the freshly dead. For some time after our entrance, nobody spoke till George modestly put in a question, whether *Alfred* was likely to sell. This was Lethe to Cottle, and his poor face, wet with tears, and his kind eye brightened up in a moment. Now I felt it was my cue to speak. I had to thank him for a present of a magnificent copy, and had promised to send him my remarks,—the least thing I could do; so I ventured to suggest, that I perceived a considerable improvement he had made in his first book since the state in which he first read it to me. Joseph, who till now had sat with his knees cowering in by the fireplace, wheeled about, and with great difficulty of body shifted the same round to the corner of a table where I was sitting, and first stationing one thigh over the other, which is his sedentary mood, and placidly fixing his benevolent face right against mine, waited my

TO COLERIDGE

observations. At that moment it came strongly into my mind; that I had got Uncle Toby before me, he looked so kind and so good. I could not say an unkind thing of *Alfred*. So I set my memory to work to recollect what was the name of Alfred's Queen, and with some adroitness recalled the well-known sound to Cottle's ears of Alswitha. At that moment I could perceive that Cottle had forgot his brother was so lately become a blessed spirit. In the language of mathematicians the author was as 9, the brother as 1. I felt my cue, and strong pity working at the root, I went to work, and beslabber'd *Alfred* with most unqualified praise, or only qualifying my praise by the occasional politic interposition of an exception taken against trivial faults, slips, and human imperfections, which, by removing the appearance of insincerity, did but in truth heighten the relish. Perhaps I might have spared that refinement, for Joseph was in a humour to hope and believe *all things*. What I said was beautifully supported, corroborated, and confirmed by the stupidity of his brother on my left hand, and by George on my right, who has an utter incapacity of comprehending that there can be anything bad in poetry. All poems are *good* poems to George; all men are *fine geniuses*. So what with my actual memory, of which I made the most, and Cottle's own helping me out, for I *really* had forgotten a good deal of *Alfred*, I made shift to discuss the

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

most essential parts entirely to the satisfaction of its author, who repeatedly declared that he loved nothing better than *candid* criticism. Was I a candid grayhound now for all this? or did I do right? I believe I did. The effect was luscious to my conscience. For all the rest of the evening Amos was no more heard of, till George revived the subject by inquiring whether some account should not be drawn up by the friends of the deceased to be inserted in Phillips's Monthly Obituary; adding, that Amos was estimable both for his head and heart, and would have made a fine poet if he had lived. To the expediency of this measure Cottle fully assented, but could not help adding that he always thought that the qualities of his brother's heart exceeded those of his head. I believe his brother, when living, had formed precisely the same idea of him; and I apprehend the world will assent to both judgments. I rather guess that the Brothers were poetical rivals. I judged so when I saw them together. Poor Cottle, I must leave him after his short dream, to muse again upon his poor brother, for whom I am sure in secret he will yet shed many a tear. Now send me in return some Greta news.

C. L.

TO WORDSWORTH

TO WORDSWORTH

LETTER LXXIV.]

October 13, 1800.

Dear Wordsworth—I have not forgot your commissions. But the truth is (and why should I not confess it?) I am not plethorically abounding in cash at this present. Merit, God knows, is very little rewarded; but it does not become me to speak of myself. My motto is “contented with little, yet wishing for more.” Now, the books you wish for would require some pounds, which, I am sorry to say, I have not by me; so I will say at once, if you will give me a draft upon your town banker for any sum you propose to lay out, I will dispose of it to the very best of my skill in choice old books, such as my own soul loveth. In fact, I have been waiting for the liquidation of a debt to enable myself to set about your commission handsomely; for it is a scurvy thing to cry, “Give me the money first,” and I am the first of the family of the Lambs that have done it for many centuries; but the debt remains as it was, and my old friend that I accommodated has generously forgot it! The books which you want, I calculate at about £8. Ben Jonson is a guinea book. Beaumont and Fletcher, in folio, the right folio, not now to be met with; the octavos are about £3. As to any other dramatists, I do not know where to find them, except what are in Dodsley’s Old

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Plays, which are about £3 also. Massinger I never saw but at one shop, and it is now gone ; but one of the editions of Dodsley contains about a fourth (the best) of his plays. Congreve, and the rest of King Charles's moralists, are cheap and accessible. The works on Ireland I will inquire after ; but I fear Spenser's is not to be had apart from his poems ; I never saw it. But you may depend upon my sparing no pains to furnish you as complete a library of old poets and dramatists as will be prudent to buy ; for, I suppose you do not include the £20 edition of *Hamlet*, single play, which Kemble has. Marlowe's plays and poems are totally vanished ; only one edition of Dodsley retains one, and the other two of his plays : but John Ford is the man after Shakspeare. Let me know your will and pleasure soon, for I have observed, next to the pleasure of buying a bargain for one's self, is the pleasure of persuading a friend to buy it. It tickles one with the image of an imprudency, without the penalty usually annexed.

C. LAMB.

TO THOMAS MANNING

LETTER LXXV.]

October 16, 1800.

Dear Manning—Had you written one week before you did, I certainly should have obeyed

TO MANNING

your injunction ; you should have seen me before my letter. I will explain to you my situation. There are six of us in one department. Two of us (within these four days) are confined with severe fevers ; and two more, who belong to the Tower Militia, expect to have marching orders on Friday. Now six are absolutely necessary. I have already asked and obtained two young hands to supply the loss of the *feverites*. And, with the other prospect before me, you may believe I cannot decently ask leave of absence for myself. All I can promise (and I do promise, with the sincerity of St. Peter, and the contrition of sinner Peter if I fail) is that I will come *the very first spare week*, and go nowhere till I have been at Cambridge. No matter if you are in a state of pupillage when I come ; for I can employ myself in Cambridge very pleasantly in the mornings. Are there not libraries, halls, colleges, books, pictures, statues ? I wish you had made London in your way. There is an exhibition quite uncommon in Europe, which could not have escaped *your genius*,—a live rattlesnake, ten feet in length, and the thickness of a big leg. I went to see it last night by candlelight. We were ushered into a room very little bigger than ours at Pentonville. A man and woman and four boys live in this room, joint tenants with nine snakes, most of them such as no remedy has been discovered for their bite. We walked into the middle, which is formed by a half-moon

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

of wired boxes, all mansions of *snakes*—whip-snakes, thunder-snakes, pig-nose-snakes, American vipers, and *this monster*. He lies curled up in folds. Immediately a stranger entered (for he is used to the family, and sees them play at cards), he set up a rattle like a watchman's in London, or near as loud, and reared up a head, from the midst of these folds, like a toad, and shook his head, and showed every sign a snake can show of irritation. I had the foolish curiosity to strike the wires with my finger, and the devil flew at me with his toad-mouth wide open ; the inside of his mouth is quite white. I had got my finger away, nor could he well have bit me with his big mouth, which would have been certain death in five minutes. But it frightened me so much, that I did not recover my voice for a minute's space. I forgot, in my fear, that he was secured. You would have forgot too, for 'tis incredible how such a monster can be confined in small gauzy-looking wires. I dreamed of snakes in the night. I wish to heaven you could see it. He absolutely swelled with passion to the bigness of a large thigh. I could not retreat without infringing on another box ; and just behind, a little devil not an inch from my back had got his nose out, with some difficulty and pain, quite through the bars ! He was soon taught better manners. All the snakes were curious, and objects of terror : but this monster, like Aaron's serpent, swallowed up the

TO MANNING

impression of the rest. He opened his cursed mouth, when he made at me, as wide as his head was broad. I hallooed out quite loud, and felt pains all over my body with the fright.

I have had the felicity of hearing George Dyer read out one book of the *Farmer's Boy*. I thought it rather childish. No doubt, there is originality in it (which, in your self-taught geniuses, is a most rare quality, they generally getting hold of some bad models, in a scarcity of books, and forming their taste on them), but no *selection*. *All* is described.

Mind, I have only heard read one book.—
Yours sincerely, Philo-Snake, C. L.

LETTER LXXVI.]

November 3, 1800.

Ecquid meditatur Archimedes? What is Euclid doing? What hath happened to learned Trismegist? Doth he take it in ill part, that his humble friend did not comply with his courteous invitation? Let it suffice, I could not come. Are impossibilities nothing?—be they abstractions of the intellect?—or not (rather) most sharp and mortifying realities? nuts in the Will's mouth too hard for her to crack? brick and stone walls in her way, which she can by no means eat through? sore lets, *impedimenta viarum*, no thoroughfares? *racemi nimium alte pendentes*? Is the phrase classic? I allude to

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

the grapes in Æsop, which cost the fox a strain, and gained the world an aphorism. Observe the superscription of this letter. In adapting the size of the letters, which constitute *your* name and Mr. *Crisp's* name respectively, I had an eye to your different stations in life. 'Tis truly curious, and must be soothing to an *aristocrat*. I wonder it has never been hit on before my time. I have made an acquisition latterly of a *pleasant hand*, one Rickman, to whom I was introduced by George Dyer, not the most flattering auspices under which one man can be introduced to another. George brings all sorts of people together, setting up a sort of agrarian law, or common property, in matter of society ; but for once he has done me a great pleasure, while he was only pursuing a principle, as *ignes fatui* may light you home. This Rickman lives in our Buildings, immediately opposite our house ; the finest fellow to drop in a' nights, about nine or ten o'clock — cold bread and cheese time — just in the *wishing* time of the night, when you *wish* for somebody to come in, without a distinct idea of a probable anybody. Just in the nick, neither too early to be tedious, nor too late to sit a reasonable time. He is a most pleasant hand ; a fine rattling fellow, has gone through life laughing at solemn apes ;—himself hugely literate, oppressively full of information in all stuff of conversation, from matter of fact to Xenophon and

TO MANNING

Plato—can talk Greek with Porson, politics with Thelwall, conjecture with George Dyer, nonsense with me, and anything with anybody ; a great farmer, somewhat concerned in an agricultural magazine ; reads no poetry but Shakspeare ; very intimate with Southey, but never reads his poetry ; relishes George Dyer ; thoroughly penetrates into the ridiculous wherever found ; understands the *first time* (a great desideratum in common minds)—you need never twice speak to him ; does not want explanations, translations, limitations, as Professor Godwin does when you make an assertion ; *up* to anything ; *down* to everything ; whatever *sapit hominem*. A perfect *man*. All this farrago, which must perplex you to read, and has put me to a little trouble to *select*, only proves how impossible it is to describe a *pleasant hand*. You must see Rickman to know him, for he is a species in one ; a new class ; an exotic ; any slip of which I am proud to put in my garden-pot ; the clearest headed fellow ; fullest of matter, with least verbosity. If there be any alloy in my fortune to have met with such a man, it is that he commonly divides his time between town and country, having some foolish family ties at Christchurch, by which means he can only gladden our London hemisphere with returns of light. He is now going for six weeks.

At last I have written to Kemble, to know

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

the event of my play, which was presented last Christmas. As I suspected, came an answer back that the copy was lost, and could not be found—no hint that anybody had to this day ever looked into it—with a courteous (reasonable !) request of another copy (if I had one by me), and a promise of a definite answer in a week. I could not resist so facile and moderate a demand ; so scribbled out another, omitting sundry things, such as the witch story, about half of the forest scene (which is too leisurely for *story*), and transposing that soliloquy about England getting drunk, which, like its reciter, stupidly stood alone, nothing prevenient or antevenient ; and cleared away a good deal besides ; and sent this copy, written *all out* (with alterations, etc., *requiring judgment*) in one day and a half ! I sent it last night, and am in weekly expectation of the tolling bell and death-warrant.

This is all my London news. Send me some from the *banks of Cam*, as the poets delight to speak, especially George Dyer, who has no other name nor idea nor definition of Cambridge. Its being a market town, sending members to Parliament, never entered into his definition. It was and is simply the banks of the Cam, or the fair Cam, as Oxford is the banks of the Isis, or the fair Isis.—Yours in all humility, most illustrious Trismegist,

C. LAMB.

(Read on ; there's more at the bottom.)

TO MANNING

You ask me about the *Farmer's Boy*. Don't you think the fellow who wrote it (who is a shoemaker) has a poor mind? Don't you find he is always silly about *poor Giles*, and those abject kind of phrases, which mark a man that looks up to wealth? None of Burns's poet dignity. What do you think? I have just opened him; but he makes me sick.

Dyer knows the shoemaker, a damn'd stupid hound in company; but George promises to introduce him indiscriminately to all friends.

LETTER LXXVII.]

November 28, 1800.

Dear Manning—I have received a very kind invitation from Lloyd and Sophia, to go and spend a month with them at the Lakes. Now it fortunately happens (which is so seldom the case) that I have spare cash by me, enough to answer the expenses of so long a journey; and I am determined to get away from the office by some means. The purpose of this letter is to request of you (my dear friend), that you will not take it unkind if I decline my proposed visit to Cambridge *for the present*. Perhaps I shall be able to take Cambridge *in my way*, going or coming. I need not describe to you the expectations which such an one as myself, pent up all my life in a dirty city, have formed of a tour to the Lakes. Consider Grasmere! Ambleside! Wordsworth! Coleridge! I hope you will.

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

Hills, woods, lakes, and mountains, to the devil.
I will eat snipes with thee, Thomas Manning.
Only confess, confess, a *bite*.

P.S.—I think you named the 16th ; but was it not modest of Lloyd to send such an invitation ! It shows his knowledge of *money* and *time*. I should be loth to think he meant

“ Ironic satire sidelong sklentend
On my poor pursie.”—BURNS.

For my part, with reference to my friends northward, I must confess that I am not romance-bit about *Nature*. The earth, and sea, and sky (when all is said), is but as a house to dwell in. If the inmates be courteous, and good liquors flow like the conduits at an old coronation, if they can talk sensibly, and feel properly, I have no need to stand staring upon the gilded looking-glass (that strained my friend's purse-strings in the purchase) nor his five-shilling print, over the mantelpiece, of old Nabbs the carrier (which only betrays his false taste). Just as important to me (in a sense) is all the furniture of my world ; eye-pampering, but satisfies no heart. Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat sempstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the street with spectacles, George Dyers (you may know them by their gait), lamps lit at night, pastrycooks' and silver-

TO GODWIN

smiths' shops, beautiful Quakers of Pentonville, noise of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk ; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of "Fire !" and "Stop thief !" ; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like Cambridge colleges ; old book-stalls, "Jeremy Taylors," "Burtons on Melancholy," and "Religio Medicis," on every stall. These are thy pleasures, O London ! with thy many sins. O City, abounding in w . . . , for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang !

C. L.

TO WILLIAM GODWIN

LETTER LXXVIII.]

Thursday Morning,
December 4, 1800.

Dear Sir—I send this speedily after the heels of Cooper (O ! the dainty expression) to say that Mary is obliged to stay at home on Sunday to receive a female friend, from whom I am equally glad to escape. So that we shall be by ourselves. I write, because it may make *some* difference in your marketing, etc.

C. L.

I am sorry to put you to the expense of twopence postage. But I calculate thus : if Mary comes she will—

LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| eat Beef 2 plates, | . 4d. |
| <i>Batter Pudding</i> 1 do. | . 2d. |
| Beer, a pint, | . 2d. |
| Wine, 3 glasses, | . 11d. I drink no wine! |
| Chesnuts, after dinner, | 2d. |
| Tea and supper at moderate calculation, | . 9d. |
| | <hr/> |
| | 2s. 6d. |
| From which deduct | 2d. postage. |
| | <hr/> |
| | 2s. 4d. |

You are a clear gainer by her not coming.

Wednesday Morning,
December 11, 1800.

LETTER LXXIX.]

Dear Sir—I expected a good deal of pleasure from your company to-morrow, but I am sorry I must beg of you to excuse me. I have been confined ever since I saw you with one of the severest colds I ever experienced, occasioned by being in the night air on Sunday and on the following day very foolishly. I am neither in health nor spirits to meet company. I hope and trust I shall get out on Saturday night. You will add to your many favours by transmitting to me as early as possible as many tickets as conveniently you can spare,—Yours truly, C. L.

I have been plotting how to abridge the

TO GODWIN

Epilogue. But I cannot see that any lines can be spared, retaining the connection, except these two, which are better out.

“Why should I instance, etc.,
The sick man’s purpose, etc.,”

and then the following line must run thus,

“The truth by an example best is shown.”

Excuse this *important* postscript.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1796—1800

THE Letters of this period are chiefly addressed to Coleridge, then at Bristol. They relate the sad fortunes of the Lamb family, arising out of the death of the mother in September 1796. They are also largely critical, and deal with Coleridge's first published poems, and the joint volume in which Lamb and Charles Lloyd made their earliest appearance in print.

LETTER I (p. 1).—Southey had just published his *Joan of Arc*, in quarto. He had produced two years before at Bristol, in conjunction with Robert Lovell, *Poems by Bion and Moschus*. Charles Valentine Le Grice, here mentioned, was schoolfellow with Lamb and Coleridge at Christ's Hospital, as also was James White. (For Le Grice, see *Dict. Nat. Biog.*) The latter published his *Original Letters of Sir John Falstaff* in this year. They were dedicated, in a manifestly satirical spirit, to "Master Samuel Irelaunde." The allusions in the letter to Coleridge's "Numbers" are to the weekly issue of his *Watchman*, which first appeared on March 1, 1796, and expired on May 13. *Conciones ad Populum*, or, Addresses to the People, appeared in November 1795.

LETTER II (p. 4).—*Poems on Various Subjects*, by S. T. Coleridge, late of Jesus College, Cambridge, was published this year, and it is to this volume, or the proof-sheets of it sent for

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inspection, that Lamb here refers as "your poems." The volume contained four sonnets signed C. L., and Coleridge's Preface announced that they "were written by Mr. Charles Lamb of the India House." The other sonnets by Lamb here submitted to Coleridge's opinion appeared in the second edition of Coleridge's Poems, in 1797. The story of the preparation of these small volumes of verse may be read, concurrently with these letters, in Joseph Cottle's *Recollections of Coleridge*, vol. i. *Moschus* was Robert Lovell, Southey's brother-in-law, several of whose sonnets were printed by Coleridge in his *Watchman*. He died of fever in this year. The "difference" which Lamb alludes to as having arisen between Coleridge and Southey was the split on the Pantisocratic Scheme which was to have been carried out by the young colonists on the banks of the Susquehanna.

LETTER III (p. 14).—The simile of the Laplander,

. . . "by Niemi lake,"

is from Coleridge's *Destiny of Nations*. The allusion to the "Monody on Henderson" in this letter needs explanation. John Henderson was a singular genius and precocious scholar, the son of a Bristol schoolmaster, an account of whom will be found in the appendix to the second volume of Cottle's *Recollections of Coleridge*. Cottle was also the author of the "Monody on Henderson" here referred to. It had appeared in a small volume of poems published, without Cottle's name, at Bristol in 1795. Coleridge had evidently forwarded this volume to Lamb for his opinion. The lines criticised by Lamb occur in the following passage:—

"As o'er thy tomb, my Henderson ! I bend,
Shall I not praise thee ? scholar, Christian, friend !
The tears which o'er a brother's recent grave
Fond nature sheds, those copious tears I gave ;
But now that Time her softening hues has brought
And mellowed anguish into pensive thought ;
Since through the varying scenes of life I've passed,
Comparing still the former with the last,
I prize thee more ! The great, the learn'd I see,
Yet memory turns from little men to thee."

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The other "Monody" here criticised is that of Coleridge on Chatterton. The first symptoms of the subsequent coolness between Coleridge and Lamb may here be detected. It had its source in a delicate matter—Coleridge's alterations of Lamb's sonnets. The "Epitaph on an Infant" is the famous one—

"Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade";

at which Lamb never tired of laughing, up to the day when he applied it, in his "Essay on Roast Pig," to the infant grunter.

Dr. Forster was a popular corruption of Dr. Faustus in the old rhyme here alluded to:—

"Dr. Forster was a good man,
He whipped his scholars now and then,
And when he whipped them, he made them dance
Out of Scotland into France,
Out of France into Spain,
And then he whipped them back again!"

LETTER IV (p. 29).—*Your part of the "Joan of Arc."* "To the second book Coleridge contributed some four hundred lines, where Platonic philosophy and protests against the Newtonian hypothesis of æther are not very appropriately brought into connection with the shepherd-girl of Domremi. These lines disappeared from all editions after the first."—(Dowden's *Southey*, in the "Men of Letters' Series.")

The verses on Lamb's grandmother are those afterwards entitled "The Grandame." See *Poems, Plays, and Essays*, vol. iii. of this edition.

LETTER V (p. 31).—*The Salutation.* The inn near Christ's Hospital where Lamb and Coleridge used occasionally to meet and discuss poetry after Coleridge's departure from school. See Lamb's Preface to the 1818 edition of his works.

As curious a specimen of translation. A copy of this forgotten French novel is in my possession. It is entitled "Sentimental Tablets of the good Pamphile, written in the months of August, September, October, and November 1789, by M. Gorjy. Translated from the French by P. S. Dupuy, of the East India

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House, London, 1795." In the list of subscribers at the end of the volume appear many names connected with the India House, familiar to us through Lamb's correspondence, including Mr. Thomas Bye, Mr. Ball (afterwards of Canton), Charles and Frederick Durand, Mr. Evans, Mr. Savory (a brother of "Hester"), and "C. Lamb" himself.

LETTER VI (p. 36).—The Dactyls here parodied were by Southey, one stanza of them only being Coleridge's. They appear in Southey's *Collected Poems* as "The Soldier's Wife," and begin—

"Weary way-wanderer ! languid and sick at heart,
Travelling painfully over the rugged road ;
Wild-visaged wanderer ! God help thee, wretched one."

It will be remembered as a curious coincidence that the same lines attracted the notice of the writers in the *Anti-Jacobin*, where a very humorous parody of them appears, which may be compared with Lamb's. Another like experiment in Latin metres by Southey was there transmuted into the more famous *Knife-Grinder*.

Your own lines, introductory to your poem on "Self," run smoothly and pleasantly. I am inclined to think that the reference is to a Fragment by Coleridge called "Melancholy," and to a poem addressed to Lamb, entitled "To a Friend, together with an Unfinished Poem." I believe that the unfinished poem was the Fragment just mentioned. Both were written as early as 1794, and the Fragment first appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*.

The poem referred to on the "Prince and Princess" was that bearing the title "On a Late Connubial Rupture in High Life," now first submitted to Lamb in manuscript.

Dyer stanza'd him. The first mention in these letters of George Dyer. See notes to "Oxford in the Vacation" (*Essays of Elia*).

LETTER VII (p. 40).—White's *Falstaff Letters* have been already referred to. Dr. Kenrick's *Falstaff's Wedding* was published in 1760. See notes in *Essays of Elia*, to "Oxford in the Vacation." Bürger's *Leonora*, translated by William Taylor of Norwich, first appeared in this year.

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The Statute de Contumeliâ. See Coleridge's "Lines composed in a Concert Room." In most editions of Coleridge these lines are dated 1799, but it will be seen that Coleridge submitted them to Lamb three years before.

LETTERS VIII, IX, X, XI (pp. 44-57).—The following letters tell the sad story of the death of Lamb's mother. Whether the Mr. Norris of Christ's Hospital, here mentioned, is the Mr. Randal Norris, afterwards Sub-Treasurer of the Inner Temple, and to the end of his life Lamb's faithful friend, I cannot say. But I believe him to have been the same, and to have been thus designated because Coleridge would best remember Mr. Norris by his frequent visits to Charles Lamb when at Christ's Hospital. See "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" in *Essays of Elia*.

Write as religious a letter as possible. Coleridge, we might be sure, obeyed this touching behest. In Gillman's unfinished *Life of Coleridge* there is given a letter by Coleridge addressed "To a friend in great anguish of mind on the sudden death of his mother." It is beyond all doubt the one addressed on this occasion to Lamb, for, as will be seen, it cites Lamb's particular request for "a religious letter." It runs as follows:—

"Your letter, my friend, struck me with a mighty horror. It rushed upon me and stupefied my feelings. You bid me write you a religious letter: I am not a man who would attempt to insult the greatness of your anguish by any other consolation. Heaven knows that in the easiest fortunes there is much dissatisfaction and weariness of spirit: much that calls for the exercise of patience and resignation; but in storms like these, that shake the dwelling and make the heart tremble, there is no middle way between despair and the yielding up of the whole spirit unto the guidance of faith. And surely it is a matter of joy that your faith in Jesus has been preserved: the Comforter that should relieve you is not far from you. But, as you are a Christian, in the name of that Saviour who was filled with bitterness and made drunken with wormwood, I conjure you to have recourse in frequent prayer to 'his God and your God,' the God of mercies and Father of all comfort. Your poor father is, I hope, almost senseless of the calamity: the unconscious instrument of

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Divine Providence knows it not, and your mother is in Heaven. It is sweet to be roused from a frightful dream by the song of birds, and the gladsome rays of the morning. Ah! how infinitely more sweet to be awakened from the blackness and amazement of a sudden horror by the glories of God manifest, and the hallelujahs of angels.

"As to what regards yourself, I approve altogether of your abandoning what you justly call vanities. I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God: we cannot arrive at any portion of heavenly bliss without, in some measure, imitating Christ. And they arrive at the largest inheritance who imitate the most difficult parts of His character, and, bowed down and crushed under foot, cry in fulness of faith, 'Father, Thy will be done.'

"I wish above measure to have you for a little while here: no visitants shall blow on the nakedness of your feelings; you shall be quiet, and your spirit may be healed. I see no possible objection, unless your father's helplessness prevent you, and unless you are necessary to him. If this be not the case, I charge you write me that you will come.

"I charge you, my dearest friend, not to dare to encourage gloom or despair: you are a temporary sharer in human miseries that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine Nature. I charge you, if by any means it is possible, come to me." (Gillman's *Life of Coleridge*, vol. i. p. 338.) See, afterwards, poor Lamb's comments on the concluding sentences of this letter.

LETTER XII (p. 57).—Lamb begins to find an interest in books once more. William Lisle Bowles's Poem, *Hope*, appeared this year in handsome quarto. *The Pursuits of Literature*, by T. J. Mathias, was also just published in its complete form, but anonymously.

LETTER XIII (p. 61).—Coleridge had removed about Christmas of this year to a cottage at Nether-Stowey near Bristol, in order to be near his friend Thomas Poole. A letter written to Joseph Cottle, shortly after his arrival, tells the same story of deep melancholy as he had also apparently confided to

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Lamb :—"On the Saturday, the Sunday and ten days after my arrival at Stowey, I felt a depression too dreadful to be described,

‘So much I felt my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat : Nature within me seemed
In all her functions, weary of herself.’

"Wordsworth's conversation aroused me somewhat, but even now I am not the man I have been, and I think never shall. A sort of calm hopelessness diffuses itself over my heart. Indeed every mode of life which has promised me bread and cheese, has been one after another torn away from me, but God remains."

The rest of Lamb's letter refers to the arrangements in progress for the publication of the second edition (1797) of Coleridge's Poems, with others by Lamb and Lloyd. The sonnet ending "So, for the mother's sake," is that entitled "To a Friend who asked how I felt when the Nurse first presented my Infant to me."

LETTER XIV (p. 65).—Coleridge dedicated the volume of 1797 to his brother, George Coleridge of Ottery St. Mary ; but the sonnets contained in the volume were prefaced by one addressed to Bowles, beginning—

"My heart has thanked thee, Bowles" ;

and to this sonnet Lamb here alludes. The lines cited by Lamb, beginning—

"When all the vanities of life's brief day,"

are unknown to me. His own motto, from Massinger, is from *A Very Woman, or The Prince of Tarent*. He quoted the scene in which it occurs, twelve years later, in his *Dramatic Specimens*.

LETTER XV (p. 68).—The forthcoming volume of 1797 is here under discussion. The numbers "40, 63," etc., refer to the pages in the first edition of Coleridge's Poems, 1796. "40" is "Absence, A Farewell Ode" ; "63" a sonnet, "To the Autumnal Moon" ; "84" "An Imitation from Ossian." In spite of Lamb's remonstrances these were omitted from the second edition. Of the "Epitaph on an Infant,"

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“Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade,”

Coleridge was indeed showing himself “tenacious.” It had already appeared in the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Watchman*. What lines of Lamb’s are referred to, as beginning—

“Laugh all that weep,”

I cannot say. They did not appear in the forthcoming volume. The sonnet on Mrs. Siddons was a joint composition of Lamb and Coleridge.

The lines “*Dear native brook*,” published first in the *Watchman*, are the well-known sonnet “To the River Otter.” No. “48” is the sonnet “To Priestley,” beginning—

“Tho’ roused by that dark Vizir Riot rude”;

“52” the sonnet “To Kosciusko”; and “53” that “To Fayette.” The last five lines of 50 are those which conclude the sonnet to Sheridan. Sara Coleridge had a share in one poem in the edition of 1796,—that on page 129, here referred to, called “The Production of a Young Lady,” on the subject of the loss of a silver thimble.

LETTER XVI (p. 73).—The “*divine chit-chat of Cowper*” was, as we learn from a sentence in the following letter, a phrase of Coleridge’s own. Coleridge uses it again in a letter to John Thelwall of December 17:—“But do not let us introduce an Act of Uniformity against poets. I have room enough in *my* brain to admire, aye, and almost equally, the *head* and fancy of Akenside and the *heart* and fancy of Bowles, the solemn lordliness of Milton, and the divine chit-chat of Cowper, and whatever a man’s excellence is, that will be likewise his fault” (S. T. C. to J. Thelwall, Bristol, December 17, 1796. Mr. Cosens’s MSS.)

LETTER XVII (p. 73).—“*The sainted growing woof*,” etc. I have not traced this and the following quotation to their source. Coleridge’s Lines on Burns, here referred to, were printed in a Bristol paper, and afterwards included in the poem, “To a friend who declared his intention of writing no more poetry.”

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LETTER XVIII (p. 78).—*The odd coincidence of two young men.* In the joint volume of 1797 Charles Lloyd republished a series of sonnets on the death of his grandmother, Priscilla Farmer. It will be remembered that Lamb's lines, "The Grandame," appeared in the same volume.

LETTER XIX (p. 81).—The lines to his sister were afterwards withdrawn by Lamb from the forthcoming volume, but were printed in the *Monthly Magazine* for October 1797, with the simple heading "Sonnet to a Friend." They will be found in *Poems, Plays, and Essays*, vol. iii. of this edition. "David Hartley Coleridge" was now in his second year, having been born September 19, 1796. Priestley's "Examination of the Scotch Doctors" was, I presume, his reply to Dr. Jamieson and others who had criticised his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*.

LETTER XX (p. 82).—Mention has been already made of Coleridge's contribution to Southey's *Jean of Arc* of certain lines in the second book. Coleridge in later years entirely endorsed his friend Lamb's opinion of the lines. On reading them again he says, "I was really astonished (1) at the schoolboy, wretched, allegoric machinery; (2) at the transmogrification of the fanatic virago into a modern novel-pawing proselyte of the Age of Reason—a Tom Paine in petticoats; (3) at the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and dead plumb-down of the pauses, and the absence of all bone, muscle, and sinew in the single lines."

The lines were omitted from all editions of Southey's Poem after the first, but were reprinted by Coleridge under the title of "The Destiny of Nations: a Vision," in his *Sibylline Leaves*, in 1817, and will be found in all complete editions of Coleridge's Poems. Lamb, with characteristic certainty of taste, selects for praise the finest lines of the whole composition—

"For she had lived in this bad world
As in a place of tombs,
And touch'd not the pollutions of the dead."

Montauban dancing with Roubigné's tenants, is an incident in

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Mackenzie's *Julia de Roubigné*—the story which probably suggested to Lamb to attempt prose fiction.

The poem of Coleridge's here referred to as the "Dream" is that afterwards entitled "The Raven: a Christmas Tale told by a schoolboy to his little brothers and sisters," first printed in the *Morning Post* of March 10, 1798, and afterwards reprinted in *Annual Anthology*, and in *Sibylline Leaves*.

My poor old aunt. See Lamb's verses "Written on the Day of my Aunt's Funeral" (*Poems, Plays, and Essays*).

No after friendship e'er can raise—from John Logan's poem "On the death of a young lady."

John Woolman. Readers of the *Essays of Elia* will remember the reference to the writings of John Woolman, the Quaker, in the essay "A Quaker's Meeting."

The poem in Southey's new volume which Lamb calls the "Miniature," was actually called "On my own miniature Picture," the "Robert" being of course Southey himself. "Spirit of Spenser! was the wanderer wrong?" is the last line of the poem.

Flocci-nauci-what-do-you-call-'em-ists! may be deemed worthy of a note. "Flocci, nauci" is the beginning of a rule in the old Latin grammars, containing a list of words signifying "of no account," *floccus* being a lock of wool, and *naucus* a trifle. Lamb was recalling a sentence in one of Shenstone's Letters:—"I loved him for nothing so much as his flocci-nauci-nihili-pili-fication of money."

Mr. Rogers is indebted for his story. In a note to "An Effusion on an Autumnal Evening," in the first edition of his Poems, Coleridge had asserted that the tale of Florio in Rogers's *Pleasures of Memory* was to be found in the *Lochleven* of Bruce. As the fruit of Lamb's remonstrance in this letter Coleridge introduced a handsome apology to Rogers in the next edition (1797), admitting that, on a re-examination of the two poems, he had not found sufficient resemblance to justify the charge.

LETTER XXI (p. 90).—*Did the wand of Merlin wave?* Lamb refers to his sonnet, beginning "Was it some sweet delight of Fairy?" In the 1796 edition of Coleridge's Poems the passage had run thus:—

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“Or did the wizard wand
Of Merlin wave, impregning vacant air,
And kindle up the vision of a smile
In those blue eyes?”

This, it seems, was an alteration of Coleridge's. In accordance with Lamb's instructions in this letter, the passage appeared in the 1797 edition without the “wizard wand of Merlin.” See *Poems, Plays*, etc., by Ch. Lamb, p. 1. Mr. Merlin, the conjurer, of Oxford Street, was a well-known person at the end of the last century.

LETTER XXII (p. 96).—*Those very schoolboy-ish verses.* See the lines “To Sara and her Samuel,” *Poems, Plays*, etc., of Ch. Lamb.

LETTER XXIII (p. 99).—Compare with previous letter of January 5, 1797.

LETTER XXIV (p. 106).—Charles Lloyd, the son of a banker at Birmingham, lived under Coleridge's roof at Bristol, and at Nether-Stowey from the autumn of 1796 to the close of 1797. He was all his life subject to ill-health and persistent melancholia. The “Dedication” to which Lamb refers is the one to his sister, which introduced his portion of the volume of 1797. It ran thus:—“The few following poems, creatures of the Fancy and the Feeling, in life's more *vacant* hours; produced for the most part by Love in Idleness, are, with all a brother's fondness, inscribed to Mary Ann Lamb, the author's best friend and sister.”

LETTER XXV (p. 108).—*The above* was Lamb's poem, “A Vision of Repentance,” published in an appendix to the volume of 1797. See *Poems, Plays*, etc., of Lamb.

LETTER XXVI (p. 109).—*Our little book* was the volume of 1797, which now appeared with the following title-page:—“Poems, by S. T. Coleridge. Second edition. To which are now added Poems by Charles Lamb and Charles Lloyd,” followed by the Latin motto of Coleridge, from the imaginary Epistles of Groscollias:—“Duplex nobis vinculum, et amicitiae

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et similibus junctarumque Camenarum ; quod utinam neque mors solvat, neque temporis longinquitas."

The Richardson referred to in this and other letters was evidently some one in authority at the India House, who controlled the important matter of Lamb's occasional holidays.

LETTER XXVII (p. 111).—"Gryll will be Gryll, and keep his hoggish mind."—Spenser, *Faëry Queen*.

Of my last poem. "The Vision of Repentance," mentioned in previous letter. *Riding behind in the basket* alludes to its being relegated to an appendix, with certain others by his two companions.

LETTER XXVIII (p. 113).—*Life of John Bunce*, by Amory. See reference to this book, a great favourite of Lamb's, in the Essay on "Imperfect Sympathies."

LETTER XXIX (p. 114).—Written after Lamb's visit to Coleridge at Nether-Stowey. Talfourd placed this letter in the year 1800, and has been followed by all subsequent editors. Yet, strangely enough, the summer in which it was written is placed beyond all question by the letter itself. The visit to Coleridge of which it tells was for many reasons a memorable one. It was on the evening of Lamb's arrival that Coleridge met with the accident to his leg which prevented his accompanying him on a walk, and drew from him the well-known lines, entitled "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," containing the apostrophe to Lamb, "My gentle-hearted Charles," under which Lamb so often affected to wince. An allusion to Coleridge's injured leg, it will be seen, occurs in this letter ; and a further allusion to little Hartley cutting his teeth, adds a quite independent corroboration of the date.

That Inscription.—In all probability Wordsworth's lines "Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree," printed in the following year in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

LETTER XXX (p. 116).—*A little passage of Beaumont and Fletcher's*. The lines thus altered are from the "Maid's Tragedy," and run thus :—

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“And am prouder
That I was once your love (though now refused),
Than to have had another true to me.”

When time drives flocks from field to fold. A noteworthy instance of Lamb's random recollections. He has here blended a line of “The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd” in *England's Helicon*, with another from the song in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

LETTER XXXI (p. 119).—*I had well-nigh quarrelled with Charles Lloyd.* This sentence seems to throw light upon the origin of Lamb's beautiful verses, composed in this very month, “The Old Familiar Faces,” and to suggest a different interpretation of them from that usually given. In my Memoir of Lamb (“Men of Letters' Series”), I had supposed, in company with many others, that the allusion in the lines—

“I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man.
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly—
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces”—

was to Coleridge, between whom and Lamb the relations had, as we have seen, for some time been rather strained. But it has been pointed out to me by an obliging correspondent that the reference in the lines just quoted is more probably to this temporary rupture with Lloyd; and that the “Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,” in the last stanza but one, is addressed to Coleridge. It is pleasant to think that this should be the true explanation, and I gladly accept my correspondent's correction.

Coleridge, as the address at the end of the letter shows, was now at Shrewsbury, on a visit to the Unitarian minister, the Rev. Mr. Rowe, whom he then proposed to succeed in that office.

LETTER XXXII (p. 122).—Lamb had been introduced to Southey by Coleridge, as long back as 1795; but, according to Talfourd, “no intimacy ensued until he accompanied Lloyd in the summer of 1797 to the little village of Burton, near Christ Church in Hampshire, where Southey was then residing, and where they spent a fortnight as the poet's guests.”

Sir R. Phillips was the proprietor of the *Monthly Magazine*.

Coleridge, in company with Wordsworth and his sister, left England for Germany in September 1798. Coleridge was

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absent a little less than a year. It was perhaps well for the future relations between him and Lamb that this temporary separation took place. Poetic rivalry and poetic criticism freely indulged on both sides had left bitterness behind. The whole pitiable story may be read, if it is worth reading, in the pages of Cottle's *Early Recollections of Coleridge*. Cottle tells us that Coleridge forwarded to him Lamb's letter, containing the sarcastic *Theses* here propounded, adding "these young visionaries" (meaning Lamb and Lloyd) "will do each other no good." The *Theses* were prefaced by the following remarks :—
 "Learned Sir, my friend, presuming on our long habits of friendship, and emboldened further by your late liberal permission to avail myself of your correspondence in case I want any knowledge (which I intend to do, when I have no Encyclopædia or Ladies' Magazine at hand to refer to in any matter of science), I now submit to your inquiries the above theological propositions, to be by you defended or oppugned (or both) in the schools of Germany, whither I am told you are departing, to the utter dissatisfaction of your native Devonshire, and regret of universal England; but to my own individual consolation, if, through the channel of your wished return, learned Sir, my friend, may be transmitted to this our island, from those famous theological wits of Leipsic and Gottingen, any rays of illumination, in vain to be derived from the home growth of our English halls and colleges. Finally wishing, learned Sir, that you may see Schiller, and swing in a wood (*vide Poems*) and sit upon a tun, and eat fat hams of Westphalia,—I remain your friend and docile pupil to instruct,
 CHAS. LAMB."

LETTER XXXIII (p. 126).—*Rosamund Gray*, by Charles Lamb, was published in this year, 1798.

LETTER XXXIV (p. 127).—The Eclogue here criticised was that entitled *The Ruined Cottage*. See note to "*Rosamund Gray*" in *Poems, Plays*, etc.

How does your Calendar prosper? There would seem to have been an idea of calling the *Annual Anthology* a Calendar or Almanack of the Muses. Southey thus opens his preface to the first volume of the work :—"Similar collections to the

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present have long been known in France and Germany under the title of *Almanacks of the Muses*."

LETTER XXXV (p. 131).—The first of a remarkable series of letters to Charles Lloyd's brother, Robert, first printed in *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds*, a volume edited by Mr. E. V. Lucas in 1898. The reader is referred to that volume for full information as to the Lloyd family, and the remarkable discovery of these letters in 1894.

LETTER XXXVIII (p. 137).—Southey, who was now taking Coleridge's place as Lamb's chief literary correspondent, had sent two more Eclogues for his opinion—*The Wedding*, and *The last of the Family*.

LETTER XXXIX (p. 139).—The *Lyrical Ballads*, the joint production of Wordsworth and Coleridge, had just made its appearance, published by Joseph Cottle, at Bristol. It contained four poems by Coleridge, one being the "Ancient Mariner." Lamb's pre-eminence as a critic, at this early age of three-and-twenty, appears wonderfully in his remarks upon this poem. "That last poem, which is yet one of the finest written," evidently refers to Wordsworth's "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," which come last in the little duodecimo volume. In the *Critical Review* for October 1798 Southey had reviewed the *Lyrical Ballads*. Of the *Ancient Mariner* he wrote, "We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit."

LETTER XLII (p. 145).—The lines entitled "Mystery of God," or "Living without God in the world," originally appeared in the first volume of Cottle's *Annual Anthology*, published this year, edited by Southey. They will be found in *Poems, Plays*, etc. The sonnet referred to would seem to be the one to his sister, already given, "Friend of my earliest years." One of the titles proposed for the *Anthology* was "Gleanings." It was in fact a poetical miscellany to which Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd, and others, including the Cottles, contributed. Two volumes only were published. Pratt, the

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editor of Pratt's *Gleanings through Wales, Holland, and Westphalia* (1795), was a bookseller at Bath, who published novels and poems, as well as various compilations.

Southey continued to send his poems, as he wrote them, for Lamb's criticisms. The "Witch Ballad" was "The Old Woman of Berkeley," written in this year, as was also "Bishop Bruno." Lamb's "Witch" was the poem originally intended as an episode in *John Woodvil*, but afterwards withdrawn and printed separately. See *Poems, Plays*, etc. The "Dying Lover" is the young Philip Fairford mentioned in the poem. George Dyer was at this time preparing a volume of poems. The lines criticised by Lamb occur in an ode "addressed to Dr. Robert Anderson" (*Poems*, by George Dyer: Longman and Co., 1801). Dyer did not accept his friend's correction. The line remains—

"Dark is the poet's eye—but shines his name."

The "two noble Englishmen" were of course Wordsworth and Coleridge. Coleridge, as is well known, parted from Wordsworth and his sister while they were still at Hamburg.

LETTER XLIII (p. 149).—*John May* was a gentleman whose acquaintance Southey had made during his first visit to Portugal, and who was thenceforth one of Southey's most intimate friends and frequent correspondents.

LETTER XLV (p. 154).—Most of Southey's poems here referred to will be found in vols. ii. and vi. of the ten-volume edition, collected by himself, 1837. "The Parody" is the ballad called "The Surgeon's Warning." "Cousin Margaret" is the poem "To Margaret Hill."

LETTER XLVI (p. 157).—See Southey's lines "To a Spider," vol. ii. of the edition just named.

Sam Le Grice. For some amusing particulars concerning him see *Leigh Hunt's Autobiography*, chap. iii. "He was the maddest of all the great boys in my time: clever, full of address, and not hampered by modesty. Remote rumours, not lightly to be heard, fell on our ears respecting pranks of his among the nurses' daughters. He had a fair handsome

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face, with delicate aquiline nose and twinkling eyes. I remember his astonishing me when I was 'a new boy,' with sending me for a bottle of water, which he proceeded to pour down the back of G., a grave Deputy Grecian. On the master asking him one day why he, of all the boys, had given up no exercise (it was a particular exercise that they were bound to do in the course of a long set of holidays) he said he had had a 'lethargy.' He must, however, have had a good heart. See the previous letter of Lamb to Coleridge in which he tells of Sam Le Grice giving up every hour of his time to amuse the poor old father, in the sad period following the death of Lamb's mother.

LETTER XLIX (p. 163).—*I am much pleased with his poems in the "Anthology."* See C. Lloyd's poem, "Lines to a Brother and Sister" (*Annual Anthology*, vol. i. 192).

A sight of his novel—Edmund Oliver, published in 1798.

LETTER L (p. 165).—Lamb had been visiting his old haunts, near Blakesware in Herts. See note to "Blakesmoor in Hertfordshire" (*Essays of Elia*).

Gebor is Lamb's spelling of "Gebir"—Landor's poem, which was published in this year.

LETTER LI (p. 167).—Thomas Manning, whose name appears here for the first time as Lamb's correspondent, was so remarkable a man as to warrant my giving a few particulars of his life, taken from the Memoir prefixed to his "Journey to Lhasa," in 1811-12 (*George Bogle and Thomas Manning's Journey to Thibet and Lhasa*, by C. R. Markham, 1876).—"He was the second son of the Rev. William Manning, Rector of Diss in Norfolk, and was born at his father's first living of Broome, in the same county, on the 8th of November 1772. Owing to ill-health in early life he was obliged to forego the advantages of a public school; but under his father's roof he was a close student of both classics and mathematics, and became an eager disciple of the philosophy of Plato. On his recovery he went to Caius College, Cambridge, and studied intensely, especially mathematics. While at Cambridge he published a work on Algebra, and a smaller book on Arithmetic. He passed the final examination, and was expected to be at

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least second wrangler, but his strong repugnance to oaths and tests debarred him from academic honours and preferments, and he left the university without a degree."

He continued to reside at Cambridge, as a private tutor at Caius, many years after the time when he should have graduated, and was there when Lamb first made his acquaintance, through the introduction of Charles Lloyd, in the autumn of 1799. "After he had lived at Cambridge for some years he began to brood over the mysterious empire of China, and devoted his time to an investigation of the language and arts of the Chinese, and the state of their country. He resolved to enter the Celestial Empire at all hazards, and to prosecute his researches till death stopped him, or until he should return with success. To enable him to undertake this hazardous enterprise he studied the Chinese language under the tuition of Dr. Hagar in France, and afterwards, with the aid of a Chinese, in London. When the English travellers were seized by Napoleon on the breaking out of war in 1803, Manning obtained leave to quit France entirely owing to the respect in which his undertaking was held by the learned men at Paris. His passport was the only one that Napoleon ever signed for an Englishman to go to England after war began."

The rest of Manning's adventures, and the result of his extraordinary expedition to Lhasa in 1811, as well as Manning's own Journal kept during his travels, will be found in Mr. Clements Markham's volume.

Manning was afterwards Chinese Interpreter to Lord Amherst's Embassy in 1817. He then "returned to England, after an absence of nearly twelve years, apparently a disappointed man. He was in Italy from 1827 to 1829, and then went to live in strict retirement at Bexley, whence he removed to a cottage near Dartford, called Orange Grove. He led a very eccentric life. It is said that he never furnished his cottage, but only had a few chairs, one carpet, and a large library of Chinese books. He wore a milky-white beard down to his waist." He died at Bath on the 2nd of May 1840, aged sixty-eight.

The Title of the Play.—Lamb had at first intended to call his play, *John Woodvil*, by a different name—*Pride's Cure*.

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CHAPTER II

1800—1809

LETTER LIII (p. 171).—*Mr. Wyndham's unhappy composition.* Coleridge's criticism on Wyndham's note, contributed to the *Morning Post* in January 1800, is reprinted in the *Essays on his own Times* (i. 261).

Cottrellian grace. Doubtless an allusion to Sir Charles Cotterell, Master of the Ceremonies at the Court of Charles II.

LETTER LIV (p. 172).—*My Enemy's B*—— is, I am afraid, a variation upon "My enemy's dog" in a well-known speech from *King Lear*.

Mary Hayes. Mary Hayes was an intimate friend of Godwin and his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft. She wrote in the *Monthly Magazine*, also a novel called *Emma Courtenay*. "An uncommon book. Mary Hayes is an agreeable woman and a Godwinite." (Southey, *Life and Correspondence*, i. 305.)

LETTER LV (p. 174).—"War, and Nature, and Mr. Pitt." Evidently some popular allegorical print of the day.

LETTER LVI (p. 176).—*Supposed manuscript of Burton.* See "Curious Fragments, extracted from a common-place book which belonged to Robert Burton" (*Poems, Plays, and Essays*). *Olivia* was Charles Lloyd's sister.

LETTER LVII (p. 178).—*Hetty died on Friday night.* Charles and Mary's one servant.

LETTER LIX (p. 180).—*To lodge with a friend in town.* John Mathew Gutch, a schoolfellow of Lamb's at Christ's Hospital, afterwards the editor of *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. He was in partnership with a law-stationer in Southampton Buildings, Holborn. Lamb lodged there occasionally for several years to come. See Letter to Coleridge, later on, p. 204.

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LETTER LXII (p. 184).—*Lamb is quite enough.* There was evidently a disposition in the early days of Lamb's friendships to spell his name with a final *e*. I have seen it thus misspelt in magazines of the time.

By terming me gentle-hearted in print. See Coleridge's lines, "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," first published in the *Annual Anthology*.

I have hit off the following. See "A Ballad: Noting the Difference of Rich and Poor." *Poems, Plays, and Essays*.

W.'s tragedy. "The Borderers." The second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* was published this year.

LETTER LXIII (p. 188).—*His friend Frend.* The Rev. William Frend, who was expelled the University of Cambridge for tenets savouring of Unitarianism.

George Dyer. See note to the Elia Essay, "Oxford in the Vacation."

LETTER LXIV (p. 191).—*Dr. Anderson.* James Anderson (1739-1808), writer on Agriculture and Politico-Economical subjects.

LETTER LXVII (p. 196).—The references to poems in this letter are to the second volume of the *Annual Anthology*, just published. "Blenheim" is, of course, Southey's well-known ballad; "Lewti" and the "Raven" are by Coleridge.

Your 141st page refers to the poem "'This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," a poem addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India House, London," in which Lamb was styled, "my gentle-hearted Charles."

LETTER LXIX (p. 204).—*On a visit to Grattan.* Lamb's own slip of the pen for *Curran*. See Mr. Kegan Paul's *Life of Godwin*.

LETTER LXX (p. 206).—John Mathew Gutch, when Lamb lodged with him in Southampton Buildings, Holborn, was in business there as a law-stationer. He was at the time engaged to a Miss Wheeley, the daughter of a coach-builder at Birmingham, and it was during one of his occasional visits to his fiancée in that city that Lamb played upon him the very harmless practical joke contained in this letter. Gutch married

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Miss Wheeley in the following year. The letter, which was kindly placed at my disposal by a niece of Mr. Gutch, is now printed for the first time.

LETTER LXXI (p. 207).—*Helen*. These verses were by Mary Lamb.

Alfred, an epic poem by Joseph Cottle of Bristol, the bookseller and poet.

Hurlothrumbo.—For Samuel Johnson, author of this and other now forgotten extravagances, see *Dict. Nat. Biography*. The work referred to by Lamb is probably "A Vision of Heaven," published in 1738.

LETTER LXXII (p. 212).—*A "Conceit of Diabolic Possession."* See the lines afterwards entitled "Hypochondriacus" (*Poems, Plays, and Essays*).

LETTER LXXVI (p. 221).—*A pleasant hand, one Rickman*. John Rickman (1771-1840), for many years Clerk-Assistant at the Table of the House of Commons, an eminent statistician, and author of the system for taking the population census, besides many other inventions of greater or less utility. He became the intimate friend of Lamb, Southey, and others of that set.

Mr. Crisp was a barber over whose shop Manning lodged, in St. Mary's Passage, Cambridge.

My Play. "John Woodvil."

LXXIX (p. 228).—*How to abridge the Epilogue*. The epilogue Lamb was writing for Godwin's play *Antonio*. The next two or three letters deal with the production and the failure of the unfortunate drama. See Mr. Kegan Paul's *Life of Godwin*.

END OF VOL. IX

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